



AUGUST 8, 2021 | ALIREZA AMANI

“The Peace That I Give You” (John 14:15-31)

¹⁵ “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

²² Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

²³ Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵ “All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

²⁸ “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. ³⁰ I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, ³¹ but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

“Come now; let us leave.

What is it like when you go through a major transition in your life?

Who do you turn to?

What are you looking for?

I want to share with you some major transitions I went through in my life when I left my home country in Iran and eventually came to Canada, and how I found comfort, peace, and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Today’s passage is found in the Gospel of John.

John was an apostle of Jesus and his audience was primarily Gentile believers and seeking believers

John presents Jesus as the Word, the Messiah, and the incarnate Son of God, who has come to reveal the Father and bring eternal life to all who believe in him.



To give context to our passage, let's look at what's happening around it.

Chapters 13-17 all take place in the Upper Room the night before Jesus was crucified.

Jesus was preparing his disciples for what was about to happen.

Jesus is trying to reinforce their faith, renew their hope, and restore their love as they go through the upcoming transition.

Jesus wants to remind them of the good news – no matter what happens to them, He is their Messiah, and that by believing in him, and following him, they will have life in his name. This is the main message of the book of John, and God's message throughout the Bible and His message to us today.

Like the disciples in this passage, we also experience difficult transitions.

Why today's passage is so reassuring. I think Jesus is giving his disciples and us three important messages. First, he gives his disciples comfort – he might be going away physically, but he is sending the Holy Spirit who will be with them always and guide them.

Second, he gives his disciples peace – a peace that the world cannot give them, a peace that will drive out all fear.

Third, he promises the Holy Spirit to his disciples. He knows that his disciples will forget a lot of what he has already taught him. He is promising them that the Holy Spirit will remind them of everything he has said and will teach them what to do.

John 14:25-27 highlights these three points, so we're going to pay closer attention to them. As we do, let's see how Jesus helps the disciples go through a difficult transition by giving them comfort, peace, and reminders.

Jesus Gives Comfort

How confusing it must have been for the disciples to hear Jesus telling them he would be betrayed, and that Peter was even going to deny him?

Jesus knows that he will soon be taken away from them and how hard that will be for them. So, he shares that he will send someone who will give them comfort, the Holy Spirit.

He tells them in John 14:1 and verse 17, "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

He assures them in verse 6 that he is, "the way, the truth, and the life." He is the way to the Father. And while he goes back to the Father to prepare a place for them, he will give another Counsellor to help them and be with them forever, the Spirit of truth (verse 16).

He promises the Spirit will live with them and be with them. He will not leave them as orphans (verses 17-18) He encourages them to love him and follow all he has taught them and then God the Father, Jesus their Saviour, and the Holy Spirit will come to them and make their home in them (verse 23)

When was the last time you felt confused and in need of comfort?

Testimony

I was born in 1976 into a Muslim family in Tehran, Iran, and practiced Islam throughout my childhood and adolescence, but life in Iran wasn't what I wanted and I wanted to immigrate to Canada.

I couldn't come to Canada right away so I ended up in Germany.

I felt VERY hopeless, because I was in a country where I didn't like their language or their culture.



All of this caused me to go into a depression and I lost my joy. I tried to practice Islam for the sake of taking care of my soul, but it didn't help me.

I ended up in a city where I met some Christians that God used in a powerful way.

I loved to debate with Christians about Islam and Christianity, but thanks God, those Christians didn't give up on me, prayed for me, and kept supporting me in the areas where I was helpless. They even invited me to their church. They were VERY welcoming, hospitable, and consistently loved me.

One Sunday, a guest preacher from Africa was preaching at my friend's church.

During the ministry time, I wanted the pastor to pray for me, but I was prideful – how can I as a Muslim who believes his religion is better than Christianity, go and seek prayer from this pastor? Somehow the desire of restoring my joy made me go ask for prayer. He started to pray for me, and I found myself crying and experiencing God's intangible presence that I had never experienced before.

After that prayer, I had such a joy the whole week after! It was unbelievable and I was questioning – what happened? It must be their God who comforted me, restored my joy, and gave me peace!

I kept going to church, engaging in classes, and after one year I was willing to commit my life to the Lord, follow him, and I was baptized.

I was in desperate need of comfort when I was in Germany. I was alone, without family, and experiencing overwhelming stress. I did not know what was going to happen to me.

I did not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit then, but I had wonderful Christian neighbours who were in tune with the Holy Spirit and who were walking in their mission field where God had called them and equipped them. I could cry out to them, and they listened to my pain. They walked *with* me. Whenever I visited them, I came away with such a peace.

No matter how uncomfortable you feel in life's challenges, God has a way to bring comfort through his Spirit. For me, it came through my Christian neighbours, helping me come into a relationship with God. I wonder is there anyone in your neighbourhood that God wants to bring comfort to through you?

Jesus Gives Peace

Jesus was preparing his disciples for the sad fact that something was coming to an end, that the former togetherness they had experienced is over, but Jesus goes on to refer to another form of togetherness, which is achieved through both the Holy Spirit's bringing to mind what Jesus has told them and the giving of peace. The effect of losing something is offset by the promise of a greater, spiritual gift.

Jesus had to leave for something greater to be given to them, the Holy Spirit.

Peace described in this passage is not based on what the world can give, or dependent on the absence of external challenges, but on the harmony and connection with the personal Spirit.

Jesus' peace is not the peace that the world gives, it is peace that comes from the Spirit.

It is a peace that gives inner and outer centeredness in the middle of chaos and even the persecution that the disciples will endure from the world.



Jesus' peace is an alternative power to worldly power and domination.

This peace comes from knowing that *they* have access to the Father through Jesus and the Spirit. Jesus' peace contrasts to troubled hearts controlled by fear.

Jesus who is the life, light, way and truth gives peace that dispels fear and assures his presence.

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus was not only going to give the disciples comfort, but also peace. Which would provide them with that they needed to carry out the mission he had for them.

I wonder how the Spirit wants to bring peace into your times of transition.

Here's how God brought peace into the next part of my story.

Testimony

I went to teachers' college in Germany, finished my studies, got German citizenship, and I could finally come visit my sister in Canada in 2010.

After the first visit, I didn't have a desire to move to Canada anymore because Germany had become my home. It was the amazing work of redemption and salvation in my life that in a foreign country I could feel like I had a home and be a part of the family of God.

However, on my second visit to Canada I decided to stay for six months.

I was asking God where he wanted me to be?

Eventually, I had a vision that God was showing me Toronto, and that he was going to open doors for me to join him in what he's doing here and serve him.

I had to leave Germany in order for God to give me a greater opportunity to grow and serve him.

This next transition of my life had me leaving what was comfortable and secure and start something new.

Part of me liked the adventure and experiencing a new country, but quickly I realized I had to go through another immigration process.

It was not an easy time. I went through so many visa and job challenges.

So many times, I needed the peace of God to assure me that I was not an idiot.

People would question me why I would leave everything I had in Germany for starting over again in Canada but knowing that I was called to be in Canada helped me persevere.

The Holy Spirit reminded me again and again that the one who sent you will provide for you, which gave me peace.

In my ten years of living here in Canada, it was the times when I most abided in Jesus that I experienced the most peace.

It is not peace found in my external circumstances, security or control.



It is peace found through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, through intimacy with Christ, and through the fellowship of believers.

Jesus Gives Spirit to Remind

Jesus has comforted his disciples and assured them that his peace would remain with them.

But at this point in the passage, the disciples do not fully understand Jesus' teaching, and he knows that they will likely forget his teachings in the future.

Therefore, he promises the disciples that the Holy Spirit will come to teach them all things and will remind them of everything he has said to them.

The Spirit's work does two things: teaches us all things and reminds us what Jesus has said.

Holy Spirit personally continues Jesus' work.

The Holy Spirit builds a bridge between the disciples and the Trinity.

In Jesus' absence, the Holy Spirit gives comfort and peace and reminds the disciples of all their memories with Jesus, all that Jesus did, and all that Jesus taught them.

The Holy Spirit is the representative of remembrance, who helps us remember what Jesus has said and empowers us to follow Jesus' example, to do God's work just as Jesus did his Father's work.

When was the last time the Spirit reminded you of Jesus' teaching?

How does the Holy Spirit empower you to do God's work?

We are human, we are forgetful. Sometimes we think we know everything, but we need the Holy Spirit to teach us and remind us. This will give us peace in times of transition.

Testimony

As I settled in Canada, I found I needed a lot of reminders from the Holy Spirit to help me in times of need.

After four years here, I was able to start a Christian childcare centre, in cooperation with the church that I was a part of.

One of my passions is to work with families.

Building up this ministry included a lot of blood, sweat, and tears, but it became very fruitful and met a need in the community for five years.

However, I experienced a lot of challenges with the church structure.

Unfortunately, even though there was still passion and willingness of the parents and my team, this ministry came to an end.

I was so hurt, frustrated, and confused that it was hard to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

At the same time as I was experiencing this, I was studying at the TIM Centre where I was connected to Young Nak Church through Tyndale.



I started attending the young adult early morning prayer meetings. These times of prayer helped centre me. Speaking with my mentors also helped me to feel understood and not alone during this challenging transition. They also shared with me their challenging experiences and reminded me how faithful God is.

I learned I could share my pain with God and allow him to speak to my situation.

The Holy Spirit reminded me that the God who saved me in Germany, the God who brought me to Canada, the God who provided for my every need, is the God that I could rely on for the next step.

Through all these different ways (TIM centre, prayer group, mentors) The Holy Spirit was able to remind me “Do not be troubled, do not be afraid. I have a plan. If one door closes, another door will open”.

Another door did open – God made a way for me to go to seminary, which is what I had desired but didn’t have the time or money to go to.

I also met and married my wife Christy at seminary, filling another desire of mine.

My troubled heart experienced comfort and peace, as well as a reminder of Jesus’ promise that all things come together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his plan and purposes.

Conclusion

I am in a season of transition again. My wife and I are seeking God for what he has next for us after seminary. It can be confusing and troubling because we don’t know what is going to happen.

I am tempted to take control and take action on my own so that I can provide and protect for my family.

However, I am being led to wait upon the Lord, seek intimacy with Him, and trust that He will give power and love to fulfil the call on our lives.

We are asking, what are the burdens in our community and what are the passions He has created us with? How can we join him?

Our vision is guided by Isaiah 61:1-3. We feel called to preach the good news, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for captives, and to provide comfort for those who mourn. We would love to join God in the planting of many oaks of righteousness.

We have in our hearts to love God and our neighbours. We see many Iranians, Koreans, and Chinese in our neighbourhood of Willowdale/North York.

We have a heart to serve newcomers, whole families, and those who are struggling. Our seminary degree majors will help us in this service. My wife has focused on Pastoral Care and Counselling, and I have focused on New Generation and Multicultural Church.

We desire to build bridges between cultures and generations, while providing deep care, service, and love.

As we seek God and trust Him for our next steps, we remember the evidence of his faithfulness and are comforted and given peace as we wait on him.



In conclusion, we have gone through a pandemic, and we are going through the transition of reopening. We are grateful for that, but it is not an easy transition.

I also heard from Pastor Song that you are going through another transition as a church. What a unique and hard season but let me ask you a personal question. What kinds of personal transitions are you going through lately? What are your fears? Where do you need to be encouraged? Is it hard to trust God during this time?

Transition brings changes and we don't naturally embrace change. It could be painful. You might want to figure out why is this happening? You might blame yourself or others for this season and become stuck in unforgiveness or avoid fellowship.

Our peace is often shaken. What should we do?

Jesus predicts that we will face hard times, because we live in a broken world, but we can be comforted that he has sent the Holy Spirit, our counsellor, comforter, and teacher.

How can we benefit from this gift? Where are we in our relationship with the Holy Spirit?

Through our times of prayer, and through times of fellowship with believers, the Holy Spirit can bring to our thoughts ideas that align with God's Word and give counsel on how to deal with our situations.

There are also times when the Holy Spirit puts passion in our hearts to help others in need, which also encourages us.

I'm sure that all of us have evidence of God's faithfulness to us in the past, and the Holy Spirit can also help us remember these times so that we can be encouraged in the present and have hope for the future.

My prayer and hope are that the Holy Spirit would comfort you, give you peace, and remind you of what you have been taught by Jesus.

Let's pray.