

Pathways of Peace



*Finding the way
to fulfillment and joy
in the Peace of Christ*

“If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.”
(Romans 12.18)

written by Paul Buis

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Introduction

Peace is not merely the absence of conflict. *Shalom* is so much more than a lasting truce! Peace is the fullness of abiding in God's rest. The first words the Risen Lord addressed to his disciples were: "*Peace be with you.*" (John 20.19b). This is the peace we wish one another during the Rite of Peace at Mass. This is the peace which guides wisdom and understanding. "*Happy the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding! ...Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.*" (Proverbs 3.13,17) This is the peace that leads humankind to its deepest fulfillment and greatest joy. Let us explore the many colors of Christ that shine through the prism of His peace.

To Still The Soul

In the midst of a busy daily routine, peace seems to be a rarity. Is it possible to call to mind a recent moment of lasting peace that remains etched in memory? To seek peace is to find the gentle presence of God in the midst of the daily churn.

*“He will not wrangle or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.
He will not break a bruised reed
or quench a smoldering wick.”*
(Matthew 12:19-20a)

Be Stilled

The constant churn of busy-ness
Disturbs deep reaches of the soul;
A hyper-active ignorance
Defies attempts at self-control.

The pools of the soul's repose:
Like waters whipped by random gust,
Never at peace when the eyes close --
Fully silted with earthen dust.

The peace of Christ, which ends the storm,
Can calm the mind and still the heart;
The soul, in silence, can transform --
Breaking the chains of churn apart!

With discipline, the soul is freed:
To find meaning in the moment,
To gently lift up the bruised reed,
With deep reaches stilled and content.

The soul, in silence, is restored;
Be stilled and know that He is Lord.

“My soul, be at rest in God alone,” (Psalm 62.6)

Lord, calm my mind, still my heart, and quiet my soul.
May the depths of my soul be cleared from all their debris, so that
Your peace may rest fully in me. Amen.

Why Worry?

Anxiety uproots peace and leaves it to wither away. Can worries ever be considered necessary? To let go of worry is to trust that God holds us and our circumstances firmly in His gentle hand.

“Now as they went on their way, He entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what He was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to Him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.’” (Luke 10.38-42)

Whirlwind Unravelled

A whirlwind of anxiousness
Stirs up the heart that can't find peace;
A mind beset with restlessness
Is scattered and seldom at ease.

The troubled heart struggles to face
The truth of its reality;
The peace of Christ, in its embrace,
Alters the soul's mentality.

The remnants of past brokenness,
And worries of unknown future,
Dissolve in love's gentle kindness --
In this moment, peace is secure.

Held close in the depths of Christ's peace,
The soul is loved and understood;
Love of neighbor and self increase
As peace uplifts the common good.

Let heaven's dew of peace descend:
"Peace be with you"; "Shalom, my friend."

"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4.6-7)

Lord, dissolve the worries of my mind in Your peace, and heal all that causes disturbance within me, that Your love may dwell fully in me. Amen.

Lifting the Weight of Despair

Despair is a heavy weight on the human heart. Where is peace to be found in the midst of this oppression? When hope is sown in lasting peace, the heart's burden is lifted, and life can begin anew.

"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! ...I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I hope;" (Psalm 130.1-2,5)

Cry For Hope

Despair leaves the soul rudderless,
Adrift where'er the currents flow;
Life is heavy and meaningless --
The night passes dreadfully slow.

Hope seems all but a distant dream;
Fainter than fate so surely sealed:
Could a soul fall from God's esteem?
How could it go so far afield?

A heartfelt cry can pierce heaven:
Drawing down grace torrentially;
Sowing fresh hope like new leaven,
And lifting up the Lord's lowly.

A newborn hope gives fresh purpose,
The break of dawn yields light anew;
Eternal life holds sure promise --
The peace of Christ is morning dew.

Cry out for hope when all seems loss;
Christ's strength will help you bear your cross.

*“But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
His mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is Your faithfulness.
'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul,
'therefore I will hope in Him.’”*
(Lamentations 3.21-24)

Lord, may You be the new dawn of hope rising in my heart; fill me with the peace of your steadfast love, and be my strength in this time of need. Amen.

Debunking Doubt

Doubts weaken resolve and perplex the mind. How can faith be sustained in a sea of doubt? Faith, founded in peace, can be rooted and strengthened in the midst of troubles.

“A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him up and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?’” (Mark 4.37-40)

Lord, I Believe!

Doubts can disturb like a rogue wave,
Leaving the heart swamped in its wake:
Can He reach out to me and save?
Or is His power just a fake?

Doubts, undisturbed, form disbelief;
The heart hardens with more mistrust.
Ingratitude comes like a thief,
Throwing out peace with a firm thrust.

Planted in peace, faith is a seed,
That sprouts in rains of heaven's grace;
It grows, affirmed in the heart's creed --
Reaching the light; rooted in place.

To strengthen faith, gifts of trial,
Are sent to challenge what is weak;
God wills we run the full mile --
His strength is all we are to seek.

Counter your doubts: “Lord, I believe!”
Let them not disturb nor deceive.

“Jesus said to him, ‘If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out, with tears; ‘I believe; help my unbelief!’” (Mark 9.23-24)

Lord, strengthen my faith, especially in this time of trial, that I may hold firm to your will and persevere, without giving into doubt. Amen.

Reigning In The Heart

Desires pull the heart in all directions. How can the soul find rest with a restless heart? In peace, the soul finds the grace to rise above the desires and reign in the heart.

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live for ever.” (1 John 2.15-17)

Hounds Of Desire

Countless desires draw the heart
In all directions from its place.
How quickly peace is torn apart!
Can the soul find rest without grace?

Intention to do good abounds,
While strong temptations taunt and goad;
They hunt the heart like baying hounds --
Can the soul find a safe abode?

Humility dampens desires:
The soul accepts its truth and place.
The peace of Christ puts out the fires --
The soul finds refuge in His grace.

By grace, the soul lifts up its eyes:
Above the heart's selfish craving.
Beyond the world's heavy ties.
And past temptation's mad raving.

Peace is the soul's humble abode;
Desires of the heart implode.

“Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ...those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God... those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5.16,21b,24)

Lord, grant me the grace of humility, to accept and love my truth and place, that peace may rule my heart. Free me from the desires that pierce my heart with many pangs. Amen.

To Be Humbled And Reassured

Human nature is inclined to pride and self-seeking. How can peace reign in a heart given over to a sense of entitlement and vainglory? The Lord, in His mercy, helps us to find a balance of humility in light of the truth.

“His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation... He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly...By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1.50,52,78-79)

Securing Mercy

The haughty heart is a rich man,
Who seeks his fill in a high place;
The humble heart does what it can,
To live in truth by strength of grace.

The lowly heart cowers in fear,
Like a mouse that runs for cover;
The humble heart remains sincere --
Not anxious at what may occur.

The Lord's mercy is best received,
With heart facing the truth fully;
He humbles the rich who've believed,
And reassures the faint lowly.

The humble heart remains at peace,
As the truth is fully revealed;
Mercy and grace only increase,
For souls sincere and unconcealed.

In peace and truth, mercy's secured,
For souls humbled and reassured.

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2.3)

Lord, may my soul remain in peace as the light of truth shines on me; that I may receive Your mercy in full, with a sincere and grateful heart. Amen.

He Calms The Troubled Heart

Sin dulls the heart and leaves the soul stuck in the muck. How can a soul in sin find peace? The heart that admits its sinfulness with humility and sorrow is opened to receive the healing grace of the Lord's mercy.

“Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the Lord; and I will heal them. But the wicked are like the tossing sea that cannot

keep still; its waters toss up mire and mud. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.” (Isaiah 57.19-21)

Gentle Breeze

A placid pool, deep and clear,
Reflects a luminous beauty;
The soul at peace, still and sincere,
Projects a living sanctity.

A windswept pond's chaotic churn,
Silted with a dull murkiness,
Is like a soul whose depths still burn,
With doubt, despair, and restlessness.

The peace of Christ can still the gale
That churns depths of the restless soul;
His grace and mercy will prevail --
He'll have compassion and console.

The humbled, contrite heart receives
The grace to clear the murkiness;
His healing touch -- a gentle breeze --
Settles the silt and calms distress.

Lord, You revive the reconciled;
Reclaim me -- Your penitent child.

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5.17-18)

Lord, may Your peace calm the churning depths of my soul; That I may be healed and restored in Your merciful compassion.
Amen.

Peace In The Midst of Chaos

When life seems to be in a free-fall and everything held as certain is up in the air, the heart is fully caught up in the turbulence. Is peace possible in the midst of such chaos? Peace is a means of anchoring the heart to ride out the storm.

*“My heart is in anguish within me,
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me...
But I call upon God,
and the Lord will save me...
Cast your burden on the Lord,
and He will sustain you;
He will never permit
the righteous to be moved.
But You, O God, ... I will trust in You.”*
(Psalm 55.4-5,16,22-23)

Storm Clouds

Strong winds are swirling all around
Fierce clouds are towering on all sides;
Torrents of rain pummel and pound --
In storms, the eye of peace abides.

In hearts beset by angst and fear:
Engulfed emotions churn the soul,
Imagination wields terror,
The mind spirals out of control.

With strength of grace, peace can be held
Fast -- anchored in sheer hope secure;
Trusting that the Lord is compelled
To hear the shrill cry of the poor.

Peace is a choice and a response
To remain calm in the caldron;
Abiding, without nonchalance,
Preserving heart and soul as one.

Stay centered in serenity;
Never lose your identity.

“Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved.” (Psalm 55.22)

Lord, anchor me in the hope You will deliver me from the storm of my crisis. May peace reign firmly in control of my soul. Amen.

Forgiveness Among Friends

How easily the heart is hardened against another for the most petty of reasons! Can peace be possible for a heart that holds a grudge? A soul that seeks to make amends and forgive builds a lasting peace which sustains difficult relationships.

“But love your enemies...your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” (Luke 6:35-37)

Melding Stone

Any hardness of heart precludes
The prospect of a lasting peace;
If trust and forgiveness eludes,
The grumblings of the heart won't cease.

The heart that refuses mercy
Dries out into a hard-pan clay:
Spirits succumb to lethargy,
And rains of grace just wash away.

The humbled heart can find the way:
To forgive and to make amends;
With gentle kindness, to allay
The hurt -- as Christ would -- among friends.

Between two hearts reconciled,
The peace of Christ will come to rest;
With differences no longer riled,
Relationship is born and blessed.

To the merciful, mercy's shown:
Forgive and live; meld hearts of stone.

“Then Peter came and said to Him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.’” (Matthew 18.21-22)

Lord, show me the hardness that remains in my heart, and grant me the grace to forgive and reconcile, that peace may come to rest among our hearts. Amen.

To Make Peace Is A Choice

The heart that turns away from a soul in need will forfeit its peace. How can a heart remain unmoved by the troubles of another? Peace is not passive in the face of trouble; peace is a decision to reach out in a way that propagates peace.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy... Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”
(Matthew 5.7,9)

A Means Of Peace

Peace is a great compassion,
When life spirals out of control:
A decisive reaction --
A shelter for the troubled soul.

Peace has the grace and means to reach,
A troubled soul in jeopardy;
To bear witness -- yet not to preach --
An instrument of Christ's mercy.

To believe when all is in doubt,
To bring hope to depths of despair,
To love when love has been left out --
All gifted with a gentle care.

To move beyond one's selfishness,
And relate to another's pain,
Fully present to hear and bless --
Is to make peace with mercy's rain.

Love one another as a friend:
Peace is the means; love is the end.

"Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"
(Luke 10.36-37)

Lord, grant me the grace to be a means of peace to those in need
that Your love may reign in our hearts. Amen.

Edging Towards Eternity

How often we are caught up in the petty matters of this life! Is peace, which seems to be so fleeting at times, worth pursuing? In the peace of Christ, we are shown the way to eternal life.

“So He came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through Him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. In Him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.” (Ephesians 2.17-22)

The Peace of Christ

In peace, Christ has prepared a place;
In Him, all souls can find their home.
All is restored in His embrace;
He is the soul's perfect shalom.

The deepest peace a soul can know:
A drop of the eternal springs,
Where life and love forever flow,
With freedom from life's sufferings.

A soul must wait at heaven's gate
Til peace is perfect and complete;
For souls left in a weakened state,
His grace and mercy are replete.

All souls are joined in communion
With Christ in everlasting peace:
Eternal life flows from the Son;
His steadfast love will never cease.

Life is complete and joy is full;
The paths of peace are eternal.

“May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do this.” (1 Thessalonians 5.23-24)

Lord Jesus, sanctify me entirely in Your peace, and draw me home to the place you have prepared for me, both in this life and in life eternal. Amen.

References

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