

The Legacy of Jesus

John 14:25-27

June 9, 2019

Do you remember the name Larry Nelson? He is an American professional golfer. During 1983 U.S. Open Golf Tournament, he was tied for first place with Tom Watson. On the final day of the tournament on the 16th hole his approach shot landed 62 feet away from the hole. The green was not flat. It had a couple of notable flections, which would make the putt very difficult.

Larry Nelson paused for a long moment, sized up the terrain, then stroked his ball. It went downhill then up over the hill, then down and up again over another hill, then curved to the right and sunk right in. That was an unbelievable shot. That putt moved him to the top and he eventually won the tournament.

After the tournament, one of the reporters asked him if he had been praying during the long pause before the amazing putt on the 16th hole.

“Yes,” Larry Nelson answered.

“Were you praying you’d make the putt?” the reporter asked.

“No,” Nelson said.

“Well, then, what were you praying for?” asked the reporter.

Larry Nelson said, “Peace.”¹ When people are calm and without fear of failing, they perform better, don’t they?

The Hebrew word for peace is Shalom. In the Middle East, Shalom is a simple greeting of hello or good-bye, but actually the word means much more than that. We translate the word “Shalom” as “peace,” but actually it means completeness, wholeness, soundness, health, and prosperity. Peace can be temporary; but shalom has a connotation of permanence.

So Jewish people often greet one another saying, “*Shalom Aleikhem*,” meaning “May peace (Shalom) remain with you!”

Webster defines peace in two ways. One, cessation of hostilities; and the other, a freedom from inner turmoil. The English word “peace” comes from the

¹ From King Duncan’s sermon, “Accept His Peace”, www.esermons.com.

Latin “pax.” Pax to Romans meant a cessation of hostilities between the conquerors and the vanquished. The defeated cannot revolt against the conquerors because they do not have means and strength to fight back. As long as the victor, the Roman Empire, has the military strength and power, the defeated would not dare to fight against it.

That is what Pax Romana, the Roman Peace was. This peace was always temporary because it depended on who was in the position of strength.

However, shalom means peace, contentment, serenity surround you, no matter what happens to you.

The night before Jesus was crucified, he said to his disciples, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives.”

Jesus wants all his followers to have Shalom, his peace. That is his legacy he wants all of us to have. Jesus didn’t promise wealth or power or fame. But he promised Shalom.

But how do we find Shalom, peace and contentment in our own lives? Sometime ago, Duke University came up with eight keys to emotional and mental stability. Here are the eight:

One, “Get rid of suspicion and resentment.” Nursing a grudge against someone is a major factor in unhappiness.

Two, “Don’t live in the past.” Being preoccupied with old mistakes and failures leads to depression. Move on, let the past remain in the past.

Three, “Don’t waste your time and energy fighting conditions or situations you cannot change.” Learn to accept the reality.

Four, “Force yourself to stay involved with the living world.” Force yourself to live in the present.

Five, “Refuse to indulge in self-pity when life hands you a raw deal.” Life doesn’t always treat us fairly. Everyone experiences some sorrow and misfortune. Learn to accept that.

Six, “Cultivate the old-fashioned virtues – such as love, humor, compassion, and loyalty.”

Seven, “Do not expect too much of yourself.”

And eight, “Find something bigger than yourself to believe in.”²

Among these eight, I think finding something bigger than ourselves to believe in is the most important thing.

Peace is one of Christ’s great gifts to us. When we have a strong sense of inner peace, we can make a positive difference in the world. If we are preoccupied with our own fears and failures, we cannot make positive impacts in the society.

Benjamin Franklin wanted to have a productive and meaningful life, and he did, more than most people. He had an interesting habit. He listed his major faults with a hope he would conquer them, one fault a week.

One of the things he noticed about himself was that he was wasting too much time and energy worrying about things without doing anything about them. Have you ever done that – wasting time and energy worrying about something without doing anything about it? Some things, Benjamin Franklin decided not to worry about, and for other things he stopped worrying and actually did something about them.

A *Peanuts* cartoon once showed Linus dragging his blanket and saying to Charlie Brown, “Charlie Brown, you look kind of depressed.”

Charlie Brown replies, “I worry about school a lot.” Then he adds, “I worry about my worrying about school.” Then he concludes, “Even my anxieties have anxieties.”

Many of us can sympathize with Charlie Brown. Even our anxieties have anxieties. We all know that needless worry is destructive. We know that God loves us and will provide for us, but it is so hard to cultivate a trust, enough trust to truly rely on God.

In his book, *Psycho-Cybernetic Principles for Creative Living*, Maxwell Maltz tells about a man named Barry Kolp. Barry and his wife took their young son Matthew to an amusement park one day. After riding several kiddie rides, Matthew wanted to try the rocket ride, which was very fast and quite scary,

² *Final Words: From the Cross* (Kindle edition).

especially for young kids. Barry tried to talk him out of it but Matthew insisted. So, Barry put Matthew between his knees and off they went.

As the rocket twirled through the sky, Matthew whimpered a little and said, “Hold me, Daddy.” Once he leaned against his father’s arms, Matthew relaxed and enjoyed the ride. Then he wanted to ride it again. It was scary, yes; but he knew his Dad would hold him no matter what.

After that experience, says Barry, whenever he himself faced something new and frightening in his life, he found himself whispering to the Heavenly Father, “Please hold me.” Just like his son Matthew had asked him to hold him, Barry is now asking God to hold him. As he asks God to protect him, he has learned to rely on God. He could sense God’s presence and his arms that hold him. After many years of practicing it, now he has become aware of God’s presence and even began to enjoy himself.³

Elisha A. Hoffman wrote a beautiful hymn about leaning on the Lord:

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms?
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.
Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.⁴

Leaning on the everlasting arms of God is the true secret of peace within. The legacy that Jesus wants us to have is the peace that comes from relying on the Lord. As we practice relying on the Lord, we may begin to experience God’s presence and a true sense of Shalom – an everlasting peace.

³ Maxwell Maltz, *Psycho-Cybernetic Principles for Creative Living* (New York: Pocket Books, 1974), p. 204.

⁴ The United Methodist Hymnal 1989, #133