

Sermon Sunday 18th October

by Adaeze Gozeim-Ibonye

Peace of God:- *Shalom*

Two Sundays now, John has spoken on The Love of God (*Agape*) and The Joy of the Lord. He reminded us about the depth of the love of God. The Bible says *Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*

When we understand this love, then we can experience the joy that comes with knowing that we are loved. As Paul said to the Philippians *"Rejoice in the Lord again, I say Rejoice"* Paul reminded them that if they rejoice in the Lord because God is near, they will feel his love knowing the hope they have in Christ. *The Peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard their hearts and mind.* This encouragement is for us too.

Paul, in all his letters, prayed for Peace into the lives of his brothers and sisters in Christ, and he understood that Peace of God did not mean an absence of troubles, loss or adversities. Instead, it is the knowledge of God's love and trust in the joy that only life in God brings. Our Reading from John 14: Jesus knowing that his time is near, encourages His disciples, comforts them, He says *Do not let your heart be troubled* and goes on to promise them that he is going to prepare a place for them and will be back.

Our relationship with God deepens through studying the word, prayer and reflection times with Him. As we draw closer to Him, we learn to trust Him more.

I like the verse on the beams in our church from Psalm 121: 1-2; *"I Lift my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth".*

Back to the word *Shalom* again. Peace in Hebrew, meaning wholeness, completeness, soundness of mind, body and spirit. Inner Peace and completeness brought on by our sharing in God's countenance and protection. So, it means Peace from God and Peace with God.

For example, Calmness, even when you do not know where the next mortgage will come from because you have been made redundant. You live in isolation and loneliness because the lockdown has robbed you of the visit from that kindly neighbour. The inability to visit that Grandchild in the hospital because of restrictions or being able to manage that boss at work, making your life miserable not minding the challenges of the pandemic yet can forgive. I can go on forever. Christ is saying to us "*My Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives, do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" John

As we grapple with life's perplexities, fears, ill health, increase in mental health, worries and anxiety, loss of dear ones, friends and family cannot meet to support each other, let us continue to hold onto the Peace of God.

Every time I walk into my house, no matter how many times in a day, I declare *Peace Be on to this Home in Jesus' Name, Amen*, yes I know that I believe it. Yet these days it has become a ritual, and possible that I might lose sight of the meaning and importance of this declaration in my life and family. As we go through challenges, meet distressing activities in our daily dealing with colleagues, neighbours, parishioners, friends and family, we lose sight of where our Peace comes from and even what Peace of God means.

The book of Job is an excellent example of patience in times of trials and suffering. Job suffered so much, yet in his pains and loss he refused to curse God. He said *though he slay me I will hope in him* (Job 13:15).

Job's friend Eliphaz, in our reading from the Book of Job, reminded Job and the others, and that includes us at this Isolation and lockdown period "*Submit to God and be at Peace with him*", in this way prosperity will come to you. Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart so that the Peace of Christ will rule in our hearts as members of one body called to Peace. Let us all lay God's words in our heart and His Peace that Passes all Understanding will be with us.

I close with the Aaronic blessing God pronounced on the Children of Israel, and it applies to us, the community of Cadder Church, as we struggle with the uncertainties of living with Covid-19.

The Lord Bless you and keep you, The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift his countenance on you and give you Peace. Halleluyah Praise God.