

Thought for the Week 07 June 2020

Welcome to another Thought for the Week from Killead & Loanends Presbyterian Churches. Even though we remain separated, we gather together in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and offer our worship to God our Father in the uniting power of the Holy Spirit.

How do you spell peace? Tricky question if you were asked, given that one of the quirks of our English language is that we have words which sound the same yet are spelled in different ways and have very different meanings. Peace is one of those words - it can be spelled p-i-e-c-e when the word means a part or bit of something, or it can be spelled p-e-a-c-e which is actually a word that is much harder to define.

The question I want to pose today isn't just about the spelling of the word peace, but how do you define peace, or rather, "how does God define peace?" If I were to ask you, "What are the colours of the rainbow?" perhaps you might remember being taught the mnemonic "Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain." It helps you to remember that the colours are: red, orange, yellow green blue indigo and violet. Or, if you learned to play a musical instrument you may have been helped to remember the notes on the treble stave by saying "Every Good Boy Deserves Football."

Just the other day I came across a mnemonic by an American writer Robert J Morgan which can help us remember what God means by peace. First of all, it is **Perfect**. Here's what it says in Isaiah 26:

¹ We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts.

² Open the gates that the righteous nation may enter, the nation that keeps faith.

³ You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

⁴ Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal.

Something which is *perfect* is complete, unblemished, faultless - the very opposite of the other word "piece" if you like! I enjoy watching the BBC programme "The Repair Shop." Filmed at the Weald and Downland Living Museum in West Sussex, people bring in items, usually treasured heirlooms, which have been broken, damaged or are just in a state of disrepair. Various experts use their skills and infinite patience to restore them to their former glory. On this past week's episode, a man brought in an ornate stemmed porcelain sweet holder which had belonged to his mother and which his daughter had knocked down and broken into dozens of pieces. The restoration expert was able to put all the broken pieces together so skilfully that the item looked like it was brand new.

That's the sort of restoration in which God is engaged. When we come to him broken and hurting, weighted down by the sin that we just can't shake off and which we separates us from our Father God, he restores us so perfectly and completely that, as Jesus puts it, it's as if we are "born again."

In the programme when the restored item is handed back to its owner the presenter doesn't say, "That will be £100.00 please to cover the hours the restorer has put in." No, the work is done free. And so it is with God, the cost of our restoration has already been paid by God himself when his Son, the Lord Jesus, died on the cross to take away our sin. The person with the broken item simply has to hand it over to the restorer and trust them to do the work. It's the same with us, we can't mend ourselves - all we can do is hand ourselves over to God and put our faith and trust in his Son Jesus, and he will restore us.

An important part of that restoration is to give us true peace. It is what the second letter of our mnemonic stands for: **Ease of heart**

As Jesus said in John 14:27

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.

True peace in this world is very rare. There is a famous motet written by Antonio Vivaldi which puts it like this

*Nulla in mundo pax sincera, sine felle;
pura et vera, dulcis Jesu, est in te.*

Which translates:

In this world there is no honest peace free from bitterness;
pure and true (peace) sweet Jesus, lies in You.

In Christ our peace is **Perfect**, it's **Ease of Heart And** - the **A** is simply for and, because in God we can also have **C** for **Confidence**.

In Isaiah 30:15 God says:

"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength,

The peace that Jesus give us is more than the dictionary definition of peace as, "the absence of war between nations." God's peace does not, of course, mean that we will be able to float through life on this earth without a care or a worry. We are all experiencing a time of great worry and dis-ease at this time, but it does mean that we can have an inner calm and peace because we have an inner strength and, yes, confidence because we know for certain that God is in control of everything and ultimately, as he has promised, he will work it all together for our good.

And we can have this peace **Every Day**. The psalmist, David, says in Psalm 69

Blessed be the Lord— day after day he carries us along.

He's our Saviour, our God, Yes! He's God-for-us, he's God-who-saves-us.

Even on the days when it seems like we don't have much peace in this world, we can be sure that God is with us, that, even through the times when we think he's forgotten about us, he is actually carrying us along.

So please remember you can have P-E-A-C-E, that is Perfect Ease of Heart And Confidence Every day in Christ.