

Peace I give to you

“To have faith is to believe unconditionally,” reads a line from a book called *The Four Agreements*, by Don Miguel Ruiz. Deep in each of our hearts, somewhere, lies the key to the mystery of unconditional love. In the past eight weeks my heart-strength has been tested like never before. I have given up a job I enjoyed because of a relapse of my bipolar disorder and things have been spiraling in and out and back and forth for weeks. But tonight, as I gather my thoughts about the Gospel of John and how John made clear what Jesus wants for us, I am reminded that we can start over, with Jesus, anytime we make our minds up to come back to Him—and I see that He alone shows us this key to this unconditional love.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you...” These are the blessed words of Jesus in John 14:27 as Jesus exhorts about who He is in relation to the Father. Do you ever have any places in your life where no consolation seems to bring comfort? Is there a place of brokenness where you feel may never be healed? It could be a childhood trauma of losing a parent at an early age, or a series of early defeats as a youth that set you spinning with anxiety or fear. We have all struggled with loss and stress in our lives...the test comes when we find the challenge in-our-faces and we cannot find peace for any price, at the moment.

This is where Jesus comes in. He gives us peace “in our deserted places” when we can’t seem to find it anywhere. It has been said that our Christian walk is a walk by faith, not by sight. And faith is a gift freely given by God. Some people discover this as they are guided through a strong prayer life. Whether this be prayer of silent meditation (Centering Prayer) or a more spontaneous type, Jesus wishes to reach us—wherever we are. At times, for me, it has been the prayer of the rosary that has led me, through the heart of Mary, to Jesus—and His heart of unconditional love.

We can all possibly remember times when we have found ourselves digging into old storehouses of negative memories. Such has happened to me recently, as I recover from my mental health challenges. Getting stuck in images of past failures is the biggest temptation for me. It’s as if the past starts to mold my future and life can spin out of control. Envy, which is based on a social comparison to another, is what can catch me up the most. But Jesus said, “My peace I give to you,” and this PEACE far-outstretches any need of mine to have what another has. In Jesus’ peace, I find CALM and the hand of the Good Shephard upon my brow.

I can see the words of Jesus plainly in my mind—that He VALUES us all so deeply that we may recoil in a feeling of unworthiness. Jesus’ love for us—this unconditional love that stretches from nail hole to nail hole across the cross—was paid for by His blood. He is with us in our suffering, as He is with us in our joy. No mental health challenge can keep me from the love of Christ. Nor can any challenge YOU might face keep you from this exorbitant love He has to give you. He wants us all to experience His peace, even when we may have trouble seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

“For He alone is the holy one, He alone is the Lord, the Most High, Jesus Christ...” and he wants us all to experience peace of mind and heart like never before. So, as we keep on trying to discover Him in new ways, He will reveal Himself to us—especially as the inner peace maker He wants to bring to you and me.

By Rich Melcher