

Who here wants clarity and control of their future? That's partly why we work so hard and save money. That's why we invest in education. And once we have clarity and control of our future, we believe will have peace. This understands peace as a state of rest. Rest is a good thing, in fact the Lord commands it as the fourth commandment and Jesus reminds us that we were not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath was made for us.-Mark 2:27 But rest alone will not bring peace.

Enjoy God's presence in the present. Take a big deep breath. Hold it. Exhale. Enjoy Christ's presence in the present. To be a Christian is to practice the faith of Jesus Christ. Jesus prays. Jesus worships. His prayer and worship life enable, equip and empower Him to teach self-sacrifice and to be a living-sacrifice. What would you rather have, joy or control?

Jesus says it another way, "I am the Vine. You are the branches. Live into me as I live into you."-John 15:5 But there is a clear goal for this practice: joy! Jesus continues, "I have said these things to you that my joy maybe in you and that your joy maybe complete."-John 15:11

Yes, we want clarity and control of our future. The disciples wanted clarity and control of their future. And Jesus names it at His resurrection: make disciples, baptize, teach what Jesus teaches us, presence. Many of us work in vocations that demand deliverables. The next report, more sales, wins. Jesus asks for deliverables as well: disciples. But this is not about simply adding numbers. Jesus' deliverable is to bring joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, self-control.

Acts 1:1-11

A few things to point out about this passage, first, Luke writes to Theophilus. The name in Greek breaks down into two words: *theos* is the common name for "god" and *philo* is a word for "friendship love." Thus, Theophilus means lover of God. Was Theophilus a particular person to whom Luke is writing? Or is Theophilus any lover of God who read Luke's first story about Jesus and now is reading the sequel, which is best entitled, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." Christ's Holy Spirit is the main character in Luke's sequel working through us, Christ's Church. We are to be Christ's presence in the world.

Second, Jesus appeared to the disciples including Paul, for forty days after the first Easter Sunday. What will we look like at the day of the Resurrection, or in Heaven. Paul describes Jesus' body in Greek, *soma pneuma*, translated as "spiritual body." The disciples can feel Jesus, see Jesus, hear Jesus. Jesus eats. Jesus also walks through walls. What will you look like in Heaven? I am confident that you will have 10 fingers and 10 toes, but you will be recreated, redeemed, the person God has always wanted you to be. So somewhat recognizable, but a million times better! That is Christian HOPE when someone dies!

This understanding of the resurrection is one of the reasons we, Protestants (protesting the Roman Catholic Church), broke with the understanding of what's happening at the Lord's Supper. The argument was simple: Jesus bodily resurrected from the dead and sits at the right hand of God the Father, thus, Jesus literally can't become bread and wine. But Jesus' spiritual presence is very real as the Holy Spirit and is present every time Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Now one thing Protestants do agree upon with the Roman Catholic Church, as Pope Leo said last week, is that Jesus taught and Christians should practice to love enemies not to kill them. If pacifism is a scale

from “1” being “Kill anyone who looks at me funny” to “10” being “I don’t use violence even if I am in imminent danger.” Jesus is closer to a 10 than a 1! The majority of Christians have not been pacifists but most Christians have followed the Just War theory from Augustine who lived from 354 thru 430, which states that Christian could go to war if: 1. Just Cause (Jus ad Bellum): War must be initiated in response to a grave wrong, such as defending the state, protecting the innocent, or avenging injuries. 2. Legitimate Authority: War must be declared and authorized by a sovereign or public authority, not private individuals. 3. Right Intention: The primary goal must be the restoration of peace and justice, not vengeance, power, or greed. 4. Last Resort: Peaceful alternatives must be exhausted before resorting to violence. 5. Proportionality: The destruction caused must not outweigh the good achieved by the war.¹

I don’t know if you have noticed, but some Christians are not teaching Jesus’ teachings. In divisive times, we are tempted to anchor hope in control—but Jesus anchors it in presence. We don’t need to win every moment if we are never alone in it.

On Easter Sunday, I preached that Christians must provide steady resilient resurrection joy. We are in divisive times, but arguing with people won’t solve much. Listen, listen, and listen some more. Provide steady resilient resurrection joy. In divisive times, we are tempted to anchor hope in control—but Jesus anchors it in presence. We don’t need to win every moment if we are never alone in it.

I have heard some Christians teach that these latest events will bring the coming of Jesus. There is a strong minority of Christians that attempt to predict the second coming. This is misguided and not hearing the many times that the disciples ask Jesus when he will return as in today’s passage. “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”-Acts 1:7-8

The disciples want clarity and control (“Is this the time?”). We want clarity and control, but Jesus gives them something better—His presence. Jesus lives to provide the Way to experience joy! We Christians are called by Christ to show others the Way to provide steady resilient resurrection joy. We are called by Jesus to teach His ways and to be His presence.

Peace is not simply rest. Jesus’ peace is working with Christ’s Holy Spirit for human flourishing while glorifying God!

What am you trying to control that Jesus is asking me to trust God with?

Love,
Pastor Curtis

Sermon Notes:

1. We often seek certainty, outcomes, or influence. Jesus promises, “I am with you always.”

¹ <https://web.sas.upenn.edu/discentes/2024/10/13/practical-just-war-st-augustine-his-framing-of-just-war-theory/>

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2. In divisive times, we are tempted to anchor hope in control—but Jesus anchors it in presence. We don't need to win every moment if we are never alone in it.
3. The disciples want clarity and control ("Is this the time?"), but Jesus gives them something better—His presence.
4. What am I trying to control that Jesus is asking me to trust God with?