



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

God be in our heads and in our understanding. God be in our eyes and in our looking. God be in our mouths and in our speaking, and God be in our heart and our thinking. Amen. You may have a seat.

As I was reading and reflecting on the scriptures of the day, and especially the Gospel passage and also the Epistle, I was reminded of an article that I read several years ago about an offshore oil rig located miles at sea. The article spoke about the erosion of the structural integrity of this particular oil rig, and the engineers who were trying to figure out and investigate the cause. What they discovered is fascinating, and to my mind, I think it relates to our spiritual lives and our faith life, but we will see. This is what they found.

The ocean waves' frequency, meaning the number of times that the waves would crash upon the structure, synced up perfectly with the natural resonant frequency of the structure itself, meaning the ocean waves and the structure were resonating at the very same frequency, which caused these severe rapid vibrations. Do we have any structural engineers here? You can correct me later, okay? Just don't now. But I think what this is called is ringing, and it causes this constant dissonance and friction and tension.

And this continuous dynamic, this interaction between the ocean waves and this offshore rig, was the cause of this critical damage. And when coupled with rogue waves or really large waves, this could be catastrophic. And so to solve the issue and prevent this kind of interaction, the structural engineers calculated the oil rig's fundamental natural frequency and removed it from the peak energy frequencies of the ocean waves. In simpler terms, they retuned the frequency of the offshore rig structure to be different than the ocean waves, and when they were separated, the oil rig could live peaceably in the ocean among all the turbulence and all the relentless waves that crashed upon it all day long.

Now what on earth does this have to do with our scriptures and what we read today? I have no idea. I just really like that story. Actually, no, I hope that I can bring this around and that all of us will resonate with just a little something today, pun intended. But there's a wonderful quote that I've held onto for many years by author and pastor A.W. Tozer, where he uses an image of 100 pianos and a tuning fork to explain one of the reasons why we gather together in these kinds of faith communities. I don't know if all of you know what a tuning fork is, but it's just a

piece of metal, and it's got a little handle on it, and it breaks off in two prongs, and you strike it, and when you strike those two prongs, it rings out a perfect pitch and a perfect note where everything can be tuned to that note.

But this is the quote. A.W. Tozer says, "Has it ever occurred to you that 100 pianos all tuned to the same tuning fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord being tuned not to each other, but to another standard to which one must individually bow." So 100 worshipers in a room meeting together, each one of us being drawn up to Christ and tuned up to Christ, are in our hearts nearer to each other than we could ever possibly imagine. It's a beautiful image. Put another way, this gathering, our liturgy, tunes us individually to the frequency of Heaven, to the frequency of the Kingdom of God, and by that tuning, in turn tunes us to each other. We are resonating at the very frequency of Heaven individually and communally so that we have the ability to live at relative peace in a world that resonates so often, so differently, and so harshly.

I think it is this calibration that allows us to resonate at a different frequency than the waves of the ocean of this world that can cause so much dissonance and dis-ease and disorder and harm and conflict. Now let me ask you, do we live in a time of dis-ease and disorder and conflict? Yes. Many of you are shaking your heads. Of course we do. Many could say that there have been times that have been a lot worse than our time, but this is our time, and we are living in a time of a lot of conflict. And sometimes we can forget and start to resonate in that frequency of all of this conflict and get sucked into that, and it puts our peace, our shalom, at jeopardy.

Shalom is a beautiful word. It's a Hebrew word for peace, and its meaning goes well beyond the English translation of peace or like a simple greeting or a welcome. Shalom means completeness. It means wholeness. It means living in right relationship within ourselves, with God, and within our community and our neighbors. In the Judean-Christian tradition, shalom is even deeper. It's an active and holistic concept. We are called by God to be people of peace, people who create and build shalom.

It really works beautifully in tandem with this concept called Tikkun Olam, which is the Jewish mystical idea that we are to be repairers of the world, to be people that practice justice, that welcome the stranger, that feed the hungry, that care for the most vulnerable around us, bringing into this world a little bit of tangible shalom. The prophet Isaiah gives this vision when he says that God's people will rebuild the ancient foundations, raise up the old-age foundations and ruins. You will be called repairers of the broken walls. We will be called restorers of the streets with dwellings.

Yet I think this work of repairing and restoring and bringing shalom can be difficult when you're getting pounded by the waves of dissonance of this world, and I think Jesus really understood that reality so deeply, and He trained His disciples and let them know that. One of my favorite passages is in the Gospel of John, chapter 14:33. And Jesus is telling all His disciples before He leaves them, "Hey, just so you know, you're going to get hit by a lot of waves," and He lists them out. And then He gets to this verse and He says this: "I've told you all of these things," all of these waves you're going to experience, "so that in me you may have peace." In me you may have – you can say it. Say the word. Peace. "In me you may have peace." He's saying, in me you have access to peace. And then He follows it up with this, "Because in this world you will have trouble."

Let me ask you something. How many of you by the raising of your hands have had trouble in this world? Yeah, and there's a groan with that too, by the way. What I find so interesting is when I ask people that, I said, "If you didn't raise your hand, there's only two reasons. One, you're too young, and two, you're lying." And you're in church, so you're not supposed to lie. Jesus said, "In this world, you're going to have trouble." And then He says, "But take heart." That word there is *tharseia*. It means have courage. Take heart, have courage. Why? He says, "Because I've overcome the world." That I resonate at a different frequency than this world, that there's something else, that the Kingdom of God resonates at a different frequency, and the people rooted in God can have access to a different kind of peace even in the midst of trouble.

Peace, shalom is not pie-in-the-sky type peace. It is not one that is operating in denial. It is a peace that is raw, that is real, that is looking into the eyes of reality, a peace that is in the chaos, but never giving into the chaos. Stanley Hauerwas was author of the book "The Peaceable Kingdom." He expresses it this way. He said, "The peace Christians embody and seek is not some impossible ideal. It is not perfect harmony. It is not order that is free from conflict because it has repressed all rightful demands for justice. No, rather, the peaceable kingdom is a present reality, for the God who makes such a peace possible is not a past sovereign, but the present Lord in the universe."

God with us, God among us. God is the one who makes this peace possible And so Jesus in the gospel reading that we heard today in Matthew, He has trained these 12 disciples in the ways of this kind of shalom and peacemaking. And He's sending them out to the wolves, sheep among the wolves. And He sends them out with a beautiful vision to be repairers of broken walls, to be restorers of streets, to be building and creating shalom, to be resonating with the frequency of the Kingdom of God, which is a peaceable kingdom. And it always makes me smile when I listen to part of that, because He sends them out with nothing. He limits all of their resources and options. They have to rely on the community for shelter, for food, for finances. He's sending them out into the community with a

command to serve the community, to repair, to restore, and create shalom, all the while proclaiming the good news that the Kingdom of God is near, is close.

It's hard to keep that kingdom and that shalom personally in the midst of a lot of tension. And I think when I read this passage, I see Jesus not only telling them, "This is your mission," but also giving them ideas of how to keep your own peace and own shalom intact as you do that. And so I wanted to give you just a couple practical things that I have, a couple of principles that I've held onto for many years that don't always work because I'm not always peaceable. But there are things that I hold onto, and I saw in the scripture this time around. They're little nuggets that you can put in your pocket and take with you. There's four of them. Presume the best, pursue reconciliation, preserve an unoffendable heart, and put in the personal work. Let me just give you a little explanation of each one.

Presume the best, don't assume the worst. What did Jesus say? He said, "Enter the house and greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace be upon it. But if it's not worthy, let your peace return to you." What a beautiful image, that you have a peace that you can throw out like a boomerang, and it's going to come back to you. You're not going to lose it by giving your peace. So presume the best and give the peace. But then it says this. It says, "But if they're not worthy." Now, that word means a little different in the text. It means that if they're not receptive, if they're not hospitable. The Greek word for hospitality is *xenophilia*. It actually means kindness to or love of strangers. So if this kind of hospitality and receptivity does not exist, then your peace that you extended will come back to you. It's a beautiful image.

Second one, pursue reconciliation. Keep short accounts. If possible, try to take care of conflicts in interpersonal relationships sooner than later. If you can make amends and be reconciled to those whom you have a disturbance within the shalom, then that can foster peace. God says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." He doesn't say, "Blessed are the peacekeepers." He says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." It's an active decision to create shalom.

Our youngest child, we had a conversation and she and I were talking last week, and she lives in a house with 10 other people. They have a community. They bought this house. It's a beautiful house but they have a lot of rules of life. Obviously, you have 10 people in a home, you better have some rules of life and they better be working. And one of their top rules of life is they deal with conflict immediately, and here's how they do it. She was telling me last week, it was really intense. She's like if there's something between two people, they'll put a circle of chairs, and they'll all sit around the circle of chairs and place those people in the center, and then as a community, they work through it.

But she said last week they did something different. They wanted to deal with all of the conflict in the home, so they just had a chair or had a circle, and then they just all started expressing all the conflict that was in there. And I said, "Dee, this sounds intense." And she's "It is so intense and so draining." But she's like, "I'll tell you what. It is one of the greatest things that we do because it keeps that home at a pace where there's nothing hidden and there's really reconciliation and active reconciliation happening all the time." It's beautiful. I will not be doing that in our home. No, I'm just kidding. I need to do that.

Third one is preserve an unoffendable heart. There is a lot in this culture that we should be outraged and offended by, but we need to be careful to not let those things permeate us and permeate our being, living in our heart and staying with us. When I was studying Buddhism decades ago, the teacher would say, "The arrows of life are going to hit you, and when they hit you, don't let them permeate so deep that they reach your heart, your core. Imagine them hitting you. You feel it, but then you see them fall to the ground, go into the soil, and later rise up as flowers." I was like, "Ah, it's a little bit – " but you know what Jesus says? "Shake the dust off your feet." You can be in these situations that are difficult, but don't let them permeate you. It's okay to shake the dust off your feet. Don't let things live in you so deeply that they erode your ability to have shalom and be a person who pursues and creates shalom.

Then the last one is this, put in the personal work. I have a friend of mine that travels the world and works in some of the most dangerous places doing peacemaking, peace building, and shalom, and he has a simple saying. He says, "Inner conflict creates outer conflict." And he always says the greatest work we can do as human beings is to address the deep hurts and conflict we have internally in our lives so that we have peace inside ourselves so that we're in those situations we can then be a person to bring peace. Presume the best, pursue reconciliation, preserve an unoffendable heart, and be in the personal work, putting it in.

I'm going to end with a story and a prayer because sometimes the acts of shalom, you never see the results until much later, but these simple acts can turn into something extraordinary. There's a story from the early part of the World War II, 1938, as Nazi occupation was threatening Czechoslovakia. There's a man by the name of Nicholas Winton. He was a 29-year-old stockbroker from London, and he traveled to Prague, and he witnessed thousands of Jewish families desperately trying to find safety for their children.

And rather than simply lamenting the situation, he began creating shalom, not merely the absence of conflict, but the active restoration of wholeness, dignity, and hope. He couldn't stop the war, but he could do something. And so working from a hotel room in Prague, and later from his dining room table in England,

Winton organized what became known as the Czech Kindertransport. He found foster families, secured travel documents, raised funds, and arranged trains to carry children out of danger. Through these efforts, 669 children were rescued from almost certain death.

Now here's the cool and really shocking part of the story. Nicholas didn't tell very many people anything he did. There were very few that knew, and it wasn't until 1988 that his wife discovered a scrapbook that contained the names and the phonographs of the children he helped. That list got into the hands of the producers at the BBC, and they created this kind of television show, and they invited Nicholas to come and be a guest, and then they did something behind his back a little bit secretly. They searched out all the children of that list. Now they were adults. Some of them were even grandparents, and they invited them to come and sit in the studio without Nicholas Winton ever knowing.

So the studio's filled with all of these people, and at one point – you can look this up on YouTube. I watched it several months ago, and it's so moving. At one point, they reveal that everyone sitting around him are these children, and they all stand up, and he just has tears in his eyes. It's so powerful. Thousands of people are alive today because one person chose to embody shalom.

Nicholas Winton's story reminds us that creating shalom rarely means fixing everything. More often it means bringing God's peace, healing, and restoration to the part of the world that you are placed in now. "This peace I leave with you; this peace I give you. But I do not give as the world gives." That's what Jesus said to His disciples. The peace of God is a peace that surpasses our human ability to understand. It's a supernatural peace. It's a peace that is raw and real and resilient. It is a peace that is rooted in the peaceable kingdom of God. It is a peace that must be intentionally cultivated and chosen. It is a peace that is not absent of conflict. It is a peace with the presence of justice and reconciliation and sacrificial love.

My prayer for all of us and for this church is that God continues to cultivate and grow this kind of peace within our community, that we are continually open to be recalibrated, to be tuned to the frequency of Heaven so that when we are being pounded by the waves of the ocean of this world, we have an ability to live peaceably and be ones who continue to practice justice, welcoming strangers, feeding the hungry, and caring for the most vulnerable among us, and we would be people of repair, restoration, wholeness, completeness, and we would be formed and known in this community as people of shalom.

Amen.