

December 10<sup>th</sup> 2017

Scripture:

Psalm 85

Isaiah 40:1-11

Mark 1:1-8

John 14:27

“Peace.”

Certain languages --- have just the right words for certain circumstances.

Sometimes there's a word in one language that just seems to capture that something means ---- and sometimes that word doesn't quite exist in any other language.

In the late 1880's anthropologist Franz Boas studied the Inuit people in Northern Canada --- especially on Baffin Island --- and in 1911 he published the book *Handbook of American Indian Languages* --- and in his book he claimed the Inuit people had hundreds of words for snow.

Hundreds of words for snow.

Some --- who didn't believe him ---- who couldn't wrap their head around the concept of another people having so many words for snow ----- called his claim ---- “The great Eskimo vocabulary hoax.”

Recent studies however prove that Boas was on to something ----- for example one anthropologist from the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Centre in Washington states that ---- “The Inuit dialect spoken in Canada's Nunavik region has at least 53 words for snow.

And he goes on to say that some dialects have 70 plus terms for what we simply call snow.

Certain languages --- certain words capture certain sentiments far better and in far greater detail than others.

The Inuit people capture snow --- variations on snow like no other language.

There is powder snow

Snow that is crusted on the surface  
 Drifting snow  
 Melted snow  
 Snow used for cleaning  
 Snow that never reached the ground  
 Partially melted snow  
 Snow sparkling with moonlight  
 Snow sparkling with sunlight  
 Snow sparkling by the light of the fire  
 Snow sparkling by starlight  
 There is snow that hides the whole village  
 There is snow that is good for building  
 There is snow that is no good for building  
 And there is ordinary snow -----  
 And each of these kinds of snow --- and many more ---- have a word all their  
 own.

The Inuit people have just the right word --- for just the right kind of snow.

Well the Hebrew people ----- have a similar uniqueness when it comes to what we simply call peace.

When you want to know about the right word for snow you go to the Inuit people of Northern Canada ----- when you want to know the right word for peace --- wholeness ---- and well being --- you go to the Hebrew people ---- the Israelites.

And the word they have is Shalom.

If you want to know about snow go to the Inuit people.

If you want to know about peace --- go to the Israelites.

Shalom isn't just peace as in ---- "I was at peace" --- or ----- "It was peaceful --- nice ---- tranquil."

Shalom isn't just there was no conflict.

Shalom isn't just all was well and people felt good.

Shalom --- true Peace --- isn't a feeling ---- state of mind --- or a state of the heart.

Peace --- Shalom ---- is a cosmic principle --- a divine attribute --- it comes from God and is revealed to us.

Shalom is the manifestation of divine grace.

Shalom is ----- everything as God intends it to be.

And of course Shalom --- is something that we will only ever truly experience when Christ returns.

That is why peace --- Shalom ---- is inextricably linked with Advent.

Peace --- Shalom --- is all about everything being as God intends it to be.

And everything will only ever return to how God intended it to be when Christ returns.

Shalom --- like Advent --- is all about Christ's return.

In the meantime --- we submit ---- and we obey --- we wait and we watch --- -- we anticipate --- and we prepare Shalom ---- by seeking God's will and following His lead.

And from a certain perspective it sounds so simple.

If we want cosmic peace ---- true peace and perfection and wholeness for all of creation ----- if we want things to be as God intends them to be ----- we simply follow God's lead.

Simple ----- follow God and all will be well ---- Shalom --- eventually in His time.

Unfortunately the orientation of our culture isn't follow God's lead at all --- it's follow your heart --- or follow your bliss.

Or follow your passion --- and so on.

And this all sounds good ---- we've all heard it before right --- many of have probably even given it thinking it's good advice ----- follow your heart --- listen to your tummy ---- follow your passion --- follow your bliss --- and variations on this.

But in truth this nothing but bad advice.

We're not called to follow our heart --- or our passion --- or our bliss --- our feelings ----- we're called to follow Christ.

Put as bluntly as possible --- following your heart will lead you to hell.

Follow your heart and it will lead you to destruction.

Following your heart means you are not following God --- and not following God ----- leads to destruction.

Don't follow your heart ----- follow Jesus.

The Bible never instructs us to follow our hearts --- the Bible always instructs us to follow Jesus.

In fact the Bible warns us about the dangers of following our heart.

If we want peace --- if we truly want peace in our heart --- peace in our lives --- peace in our world ---- then we have to follow Jesus.

Contrary to much of the advice we may have received over the years ----- fools follow their heart ---- and wise people follow Jesus.

Jeremiah 17 verse 9 reads ---- "The heart is deceitful above all things..."

"The heart is deceitful above all things..."

And yet we say things like ---- "Well ----- It just feels right."

or

"I'm going to follow my heart --- or my gut --- on this one --- it just feels right."

Jeremiah 17:9 ---- “The heart is deceitful above all things...”

And then there are the words of Jesus Himself --- Matthew 15 verse 19 -----  
 “For out of the heart come evil thoughts...”

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts...” ---- and this is Jesus speaking.

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts...”

Don't follow your heart --- follow Jesus.

Psalm 23 isn't --- “My heart is my shepherd.”

It's --- “The Lord is my shepherd.”

The Lord is my shepherd --- the Lord is my guide ---- I follow Him.

Determining right from wrong based on feelings --- remember the heart is all  
 about feelings.

Determining right from wrong based on the heart --- based on feelings -----  
 ----- is a very dangerous and very unbiblical way of living.

Follow Jesus not your heart if you want true peace --- if you want Shalom.

Follow Jesus not your heart if you want things to be as God intends them to  
 be.

In John 14 verse 1 it's ---- “Let not your hearts be troubled ----- believe in  
 God --- believe also in me.”

“Let not your hearts be troubled ----- believe in God --- believe also in me.”

It's not ----- “Let not your hearts be troubled --- just believe in your hearts.”

And it's not ---- “Let not your hearts be troubled --- just follow your hearts.”

Jesus says in our last reading today --- John 14:27 ----- “Peace I leave with you --- my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Peace --- Shalom --- does not come from this world.

Peace --- Shalom ----- does not come from our heart.

Peace ----- Shalom --- does not come from following our heart --- or following your feelings.

How we feel about something is a very unreliable thing to go on --- and base decisions on.

We don't base our life on how we feel as Christians --- we base our lives on God's leading.

Our heart will try to shepherd us --- over and over and over again --- our hearts will try to shepherd us --- Jesus says ----- don't let them.

“It just feels right.” --- is not a Biblical motto.

It just feels right --- I liked it ----- it was nice --- I enjoyed it ----- none of these are Biblical teachings.

Jesus says ----- follow me --- not your heart --- “...out of the heart come evil thoughts...” ----- He says.

If we want peace --- if we want Shalom ----- we can't find it in things of this world --- hearts and feelings ----- it can only come from God --- from Christ.

It's not by mistake that God has it that when we return to Him --- when we die ----- our heart stops beating.

All deaths are the result of oxygen failing to reach the brain --- and oxygen fails to reach the brain only after the heart stops beating.

Only after we stop following our heart depending on our heart ----- can we truly dwell in the eternal presence of God.

Don't follow your heart --- follow Jesus.

“Peace I leave with you --- my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

If our peace doesn't come from God --- our hearts will be troubled --- we will be troubled.

The heart is troubling.

“The heart is deceitful above all things...” --- Jeremiah 17:9.

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts...” --- Jesus Christ in Matthew 15:19.

To make any decisions based on how we feel ---- based on the orientation of our heart ----- is to base decisions on that which is corrupt.

As Christians we are called to choose books to read --- TV shows to watch – songs to listen to ---- not from our hearts but from God's leading.

As Christians we are called to organize our whole lives --- what we do --- who we spend time with ---- what we spend our time --- what we spend our money on ----- how we make decisions ----- absolutely everything ----- based not on how we feel --- but on what God is saying to us --- how he is directing us.

It's not follow your heart --- it's follow God.

It's not my heart is my shepherd --- it's the Lord is my shepherd.

Shalom --- peace --- is things are as God intends them to be --- not things are as --- I like them to be --- or I feel they should be.

We have to consult God and we have to follow God --- not our hearts.

“The heart is deceitful above all things...”

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts...”

“Peace I leave with you --- my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

And Jesus doesn't fix hearts --- He replaces them with new ones.

It's not about fixing ---- it's about replacing.

Replacing our feelings --- our wants --- our needs ---- our thoughts --- with God's wants needs and thoughts.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says ----- “Therefore if anyone is in Christ --- the new creation has come ---- the old has gone --- the new is here.”

There is the old way ---- I feel ----- I want --- I have thought about this and think such and such.

And then there is the new way ----- “Therefore if anyone is in Christ --- the new creation has come ---- the new heart has come ---- old has gone --- the old heart is gone ---- and the new is here.”

Paul has a wonderfully blunt way of putting it in Galatians 5:17 --- “you are not to do whatever you want.” ----- in other words you are not to follow your heart --- you are to follow God --- and do what He wants.

Galatians 5:17 ----- “For the flesh ---- desires what is contrary to the Spirit -- -- and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with one another --- so that you are not to do whatever you want.”

“For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit” ----- the fleshiest part of our body is our heart --- the heart is the fleshiest thing we have – it's all flesh – no bones and no cartilage even.

“For the flesh ----- desires what is contrary to the Spirit ---- and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with one another --- so that you are not to do whatever you want.”

Our lives --- our worship ----- are not about what we want.

They have to be about what God wants --- not what we want.



“For the flesh ---- desires what is contrary to the Spirit ---- and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with one another --- so that you are not to do whatever you want.”

It's not about following your heart ---- it's not about doing what you want to do --- it's about following God and doing what He wants us to do.

Peace ---Shalom ---- is only ever approximated when we stop following our heart and start following His will.

And yet we mostly do exactly the opposite.

“I've thought about this.”

“I've talked to others ---- I've talked to so and so about this.”

Talking and thinking can be good --- but they are a terrible place to start.

Talking and thinking --- are heart activities.

Talking and thinking are heart talk --- heart orientation.

On the other hand ----- “I've prayed about this.” ---- and --- “I've taken this to God.” ----- that's Spirit talk --- that's follow God talk --- that's the Lord is my shepherd orientation.

Shalom --- peace ---- everything as God intends it to be ---- is never reached by thinking about it and talking with others about it ----- getting feedback about it.

Shalom --- peace ---- approximating things as God intends them to be --- is about --- praying ---- reading God's word --- seeking God's direction --- allowing God to lead --- even when it's uncomfortable.

Shalom ---- peace ----- is only ever reached in consultation --- in deep consultation --- in Communion with God.

“For the flesh ---- desires what is contrary to the Spirit ---- and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with one another --- so that you are not to do whatever you want.”

“You are not to do what you want.” --- the Bible says.

We are to do as God wants.

“The heart is deceitful above all things...”

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts...” --- and this is Jesus speaking.

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts...”

The peace that surpasses all understanding is something we only ever achieve or approximate --- when we give control over to Him and seek and follow His lead.

Determining right and wrong --- what to do and what not to do based on feelings --- based on the heart --- the cradle of feelings --- is dangerous and more to the point ----- is unbiblical.

Jesus never based what He was doing on feedback and feelings ----- 99% of Israel hated Jesus --- if Jesus had of done things based on what people wanted ---- based on the feelings of others ----- He never would have been The Christ.

He may have been a teacher but He never would have The Christ if he followed other people --- and their feelings --- and not God.

He did what He did because he followed God’s direction.

We can never be whole --- we can never be complete ----- we can never be perfect --- clean --- reconciled redeemed --- saved ---- we can never be as God intends us to be --- we can never have Shalom ---- if we don’t first follow God’s direction in our lives --- and push aside our feelings.

A life of faith is not about what we think --- what we like --- what our heart says to us --- what our gut says to us --- a life of faith is all about what God is saying to us and where God is leading us.

As the great saint --- Augustine of Hippo said --- ---“Our hearts are restless until they find there rest in thee O Lord.”

And Isaiah says in our reading for today ---- “verse 5 --- “All the glory of the Lord will be revealed...”

The Glory of the Lord will be revealed.

Revealed ----- means it comes from outside of us.

A revelation comes from the outside --- from God --- not from within.

We don't know best --- we don't even know better --- we don't know ---- but thankfully God does.

Shalom --- is so beautiful --- and so good --- and so true --- precisely because it has nothing to do with the human heart or feelings.

It's a cosmic principle.

It's a divine attribute.

It's a manifestation of divine grace.

It's utter perfection.

Things as God ----- intends them to be.

That's what we long for.

That's what we wait for.

That's what Advent is all about --- the return of Christ ----- things returning to exactly how God intended them to be in the first place.

So when we think peace ----- forget about heart ----- feelings and sentimentality.

Go deeper.

Think God's will ---- wholeness --- completeness --- perfection --- things as God wants them to be --- not us --- not how we want them to be --- not how we feel.

Forget about feeling --- faith isn't about feeling --- it's about dependency and obedience.

Dependency and obedience to God.

The world --- the church ---- needs more dependency and the world --- the church needs more obedience.

Peace ----- Shalom ----- comes only after we realize we cannot generate it ourselves.

Peace and Shalom ---- don't come from the heart ----- they come from Him.

What we think ---- what we feel --- what we want --- what our hearts tell us -- -- what our gut tell us --- will never ever ever bring us peace

Only God can.

The Lord is my shepherd ---- not my heart is my shepherd.

We've got to stop feeling and start submitting.

Dependency --- obedience.

Shalom --- has at its roots dependency --- obedience --- submission.

It's not peace we long for --- it is Shalom.

And Shalom comes when God comes.

And so we wait ---- and we prepare.

And as we wait and as we prepare --- we are all about dependency --- and we are all about obedience --- and we are all about submission.

Shalom ---- peace this Advent and this Christmas --- begins with submitting our wills to His.

Amen.