

The Leprosy Mission - Letting the Light In Devotionals

**Week 3 – Peace**

Please find the following readings at the end of the devotional for reference:

John 14:1-27 (‘peace I leave with you’)

The joy of music is one of the most profound human experiences. Recent archaeological digs have discovered flutes carbon dated to over 40,000 years old. There is even evidence which suggests these flutes would have relied on a deeper tradition of music-making, possibly going back to the very first humans. But whatever we come to find about archaeology or anthropology, it is indisputable that music has the power to affect us in extraordinary ways.

Music is mentioned throughout the Bible in various stages of the history of humanity: after the Israelites escaped Pharaoh’s chariots, the Book of Exodus records Moses as leading them in a song to the Lord; the prophet Amos chastises Israel for lounging around playing music when they should be bringing justice to the poor and innocent, and particularly to women; in Paul’s letter to the Colossians, he exhorts them to sing hymns together with gratitude; and there is no shortage of musical references across the Psalms.

Chances are that in the past two weeks most – if not all – of us have listened to some kind of music while stuck at home. Sometimes we listen to music in the background, barely noticing what we hear but nevertheless finding comfort or energy in the harmonies and rhythms. Sometimes we listen to music deliberately: for example, the first time I heard Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* as a teenager, I immediately had to listen to it all over again, undisturbed, with headphones on. The joy of music can be so powerful that we cannot stop ourselves from praising God for the gift of such an experience.

For those of you who have ever attended a Choral Evensong service, you will know that music is the primary medium through which the congregation engages in worship to God. One of the collects – or structured prayers – that the congregation says together in the service is called the Collect for Peace. It goes like this:

*O GOD, from whom all holy desires,
all good counsels, and all just works do proceed;
Give unto thy servants that peace
which the world cannot give;
that our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments,
and also that by thee, we,
being defended from the fear of our enemies,
may pass our time in rest and quietness;
through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.*

The Collect for Peace is inspired by the words of Jesus in John chapter 14. Jesus is talking about the promise of the Holy Spirit which is to come on the Day of Pentecost. He says to his disciples ‘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.’

It is natural in the present circumstances to fear what is going to happen next. As the outbreak of covid-19 continues and we see the numbers of people infected and dying, the uncertainty can feel overwhelming. It seems more and more of us know someone who has been infected, and in a few tragic cases knowing of someone who we have recently lost. Where can we take comfort?

One of the things that strikes me about the Collect for Peace is the line *‘by thee, we, being defended from the fear of our enemies’.* Notice how the prayer does not say ‘being defended from our enemies’, but ‘being defended from the fear of our enemies’. Jesus does not promise us an easy life. Almost all of us have, and will, fall on hard times. Whether the enemy we imagine is a person, a political power, or a plague, we are not promised to never have enemies. But we do know that, following the words of Jesus, we can take confidence in the Spirit that Our Father in Heaven gives. ‘Peace I give to you’. ‘Do not be troubled and do not be afraid’. In Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, we can live without fear, even – if not especially – when the world looks as though it is about to collapse.

I recently read a story about a Nigerian called Ikoli Whyte who was diagnosed with leprosy 100 years ago. At the time there was no cure for the disease; people with leprosy were feared, and themselves were living in fear. As a result, he was effectively quarantined inside a leprosy colony in South East Nigeria. It was there that Whyte met the Christian medical missionary Thomas Frank Davey, a music-lover and pianist. Dr Davey’s passion for music incited the same love in Whyte, who learnt everything he could from him. Over time, Whyte found his own style and began writing his own music. Taking courage from the love of Christ expressed to him in the life of Dr Davey, Whyte remained in the leprosy colony to create and lead a choir of leprosy patients. By the end of his life, Ikoli Whyte had composed well over 200 hymns. That gift of joy in music given to him was turned into praise. Even today, there is a Leprosy Mission children’s choir in Nigeria, where the songs of Whyte can be heard.

May we too find peace in Christ, a peace that only he can give, and may the gift of joy in music and in all things lead us back to him in praise. Amen.

*Written by Jarrett Wilson-Gray*

Bible reading

### Jesus Comforts His Disciples

**14**“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3A1-27&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26670a)]; believe also in me. **2**My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? **3**And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4**You know the way to the place where I am going.”

### Jesus the Way to the Father

**5**Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

**6**Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **7**If you really know me, you will know[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3A1-27&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26676b)] my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

**8**Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

**9**Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? **10**Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. **11**Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. **12**Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. **13**And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **14**You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

### Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

**15**“If you love me, keep my commands. **16**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— **17**the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3A1-27&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26686c)] in you. **18**I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. **19**Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. **20**On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. **21**Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

**22**Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

**23**Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. **24**Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

**25**“All this I have spoken while still with you. **26**But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. **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.

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