

In This World You Will Have Trouble, But In Jesus You Can Have Peace

Sunday After the Boston Marathon Bombing

It's weeks like these,
when guys like me,
stay on our knees.

We stay on our knees because what we yearn for most is for Jesus to come and speak into these times of tragedy. We yearn to hear from the God-man, not mere man. We yearn to hear from the divine-man who dwelled on this painful planet. We yearn to hear the words of him who understands the frailty and brevity of human life.

Psalm 103:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
¹⁶ for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.

Men, during times like these, have lots of words, but only Jesus has the "words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). What we need most is to hear from Jesus, not anchormen or commentators.

Father, I pray that what I sense you have laid upon my heart to say, will truly be your words and not mine. Please, give me now your words.

Jesus What Would You Say?

Friday as I sat and began preparing for this morning, the question that was on my mind was, "Jesus, what would you say if you were preparing to address your people? What would say if you were here with us?" I sat quietly with that question for quite a while.

Sitting quietly turned out to be more difficult than usual. It was difficult to sit and think about anything other than the massive man-hunt that was taking place in Watertown. However, it was more quiet than usual. Route 3, which runs directly in front of our house, was eerily empty.

Usually it is roaring all day long, but not on Friday. Friday was different. The Boston Globe reported that Friday will be remembered as “the day the city stood still.”¹

Friday was like someone had pressed a city-wide pause button—which is exactly what Governor Patrick and the Mayor Menino did—they locked down the entire city of Boston. Streets were empty. Downtown was vacant. The MBTA was shutdown—no buses, subway, trains, or taxi’s. The Red Sox and Bruins postponed their games. Businesses were closed. [All businesses that is except Dunkin’ Donuts. Dunkin’ remained open² at the request of law enforcement officers and Dunkin’ chose to serve them for free.]

Friday the city was silent. The city was sober.

The city was silent and sober until Friday night at about 8:45 p.m. when the suspect number 2 was taken into custody alive. Then cheers erupted and shouts of praise of Boston Police Department and other law enforcement spontaneously broke out. Hundreds and hundreds of people poured into the streets singing and shouting and having their pictures taken with policemen.

What a week this has been! Monday we were shocked and stunned by the explosions. Tuesday we were grieving as we learned of the loss of life and loss of limbs. Wednesday we were praying and crying out for justice. Thursday we were angry. Friday morning we were silent and by Friday night we were cheering. There was a city-wide sigh of relief when we heard the words “We got him!” Finally Boston could rest. Finally we could turn off the TV. I was emotionally exhausted.

Yesterday the MBTA was up and running again. Businesses were open. People were back on the road again. People were once again on the streets. Boston was busy again. The Red Sox and the Bruins were playing once again.

But before we return to work tomorrow and get back to business as usual, lets not too quickly pass over this moment. Let’s not be too quick to press play again. Let’s stop for a moment and return to the question I asked earlier. If Jesus were to walk in here this morning and we were to give him the microphone, what would he say?

Of course, I’m only speculating, but I think there are two things he would say. One he would say to those who are already his followers and the second he would say to those who are not yet his followers.

¹ Source <http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2013/04/20/second-marathon-suspect-captured-manhunt-ends/4ICVhfRArrGjgsiJnzJ2mM/story.html> accessed 20 April 2013.

² Source <http://www.boston.com/businessupdates/2013/04/19/cops-request-dunkin-donuts-stays-open/a981LXWXrfuZAAgnIM1YjL/story.html> accessed 20 April 2013.

What Jesus Would Say To His Followers

If Jesus were to walk in here this morning, I think he would first address his followers and say something like,

“While you live on this planet, you will experience trouble,
but don’t be troubled by this.”

You may think this sounds a bit trite. Or, like me, you may wonder, “Would Jesus really say something so cliché?” Saying something like that almost seems to belittle the intense difficulty that we sometimes have to endure in this broken world and many have endured this week. Is that really something that Jesus would say in the face of the unimaginable tragedy Boston has experienced this week? Does that not seem a little hollow? Would he really look someone in the face who has just experienced incredible trauma and say something like that? Would he really stand in the face of such obvious evil as we have witnessed this week and say anything of the sort?

I sat and thought about this for a while.

Then I thought, “Didn’t Jesus actually say something like this? I think I’ve read something like this somewhere.” So I reached for my Bible and started flipping pages. Then I found it in the Gospel of John.

John 16:33 (ESV)

³³ “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples on the night before his death. I suspect that night was the darkest night of Jesus’ life, as well as, the darkest night of the disciples’ lives too. He spoke these words on the threshold of greatest tragedy in human history—Jesus’ death. He spoke these words just before the most heinous murder that would ever be committed. These are not trite or flippant words.

Furthermore, he spoke these words immediately after telling the disciples that each one of them would be scattered and would abandon him, leaving him alone, to return to their own houses in order to “shelter in place.” While he was being tried and abused, they would be safe at home.

Jesus Wants Peace for His Followers

Note that Jesus says, “I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace.” Jesus explained that the reason he was telling them about all the horror that was about to happen, was so that they could have peace. He was not telling them that they would fail him to cause them to feel guilty or to destroy them, but in order that they may have peace. *Jesus wanted*

his disciples to experience peace. I believe his desire this morning is the same. I believe he wants each of his children to experience peace. I believe if Jesus were here this morning he would say, "I want you have peace."

How does telling someone in advance that they will abandon him in his greatest hour of need result in peace? First, it causes you to have peace in his sovereignty because he knows what's coming. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that he was in control of the terrible events that were about to unfold and he wanted them to know that his love for them would remain undaunted. He was saying, "In a little while, you'll leave me, but I will never leave you." This shocking truth can bring us peace. The night may be incredibly dark, but darkness is as light to him (Ps 139:11). It may look dark to you right now, but Jesus can give you peace.

Jesus Offers His Peace

Notice also that the kind of peace he offers to his disciples is qualified. He said, "*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.*" The peace that Jesus offers is "in" him. True peace is only found *in him*. We must be *in him* in order to experience *his peace*. The only peace that he offers is a peace that comes from him. Recall that earlier he had said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you*" (Jn 14:27).

The kind of peace that Boston needs is a peace that can only be found in Jesus. The peace that this city needs most is not found in a wonderfully dedicated and diligent police force or in capable and articulate leaders. True peace is not found in a strong military or a brilliant FBI. The true peace for which Boston yearns, yet may not even be aware of, is the peace of Christ, which is a peace that can exist between a holy God and unholy man. This is the peace that Jesus brings—the peace of having one's sins atoned for and forgiveness granted.

A World of Tribulation

Notice also that the kind of peace about which Jesus speaks is not a world that is free from trouble. He's not talking about world-peace. "*In the world you will have tribulation.*" Evidently, Jesus assumes this world will always have some degree of tribulation. Tribulation is certain. Tribulation is normal in *this* world. Tribulation is normal in our abnormal world. This world is a broken world.

On Monday 3 died and 180 were wounded in Boston.

On Wednesday an explosion in the Texas town of West killed 14 and wounded 200.

Early yesterday morning 160 died and 6,700 were wounded in an earthquake in China.

This world in which we live is a broken world.

'Tribulation' means 'distress, suffering, persecution, or hardship.' It is a word also used for childbirth. This world in which we live is one in which it is natural to experience trouble. Trouble is unavoidable in this world. This "whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 Jn

5:19). Since the Fall, this world has been cursed (Gn 3:17). The whole of creation is under bondage (of decay) and groans under the penalty of sin (Rom 8:21-23). Therefore, trouble in this world should be expected until the curse is finally removed and all the enemies of Christ have been put under his feet (1 Cor 15:24-26).

Take Heart, I Have Overcome this World

Though there is trouble in this world, Jesus offers us his peace because he has overcome the world. He says to his disciples, "Take heart, I have overcome the world." How? In what way has he overcome this world?

His overcoming power is evident by his resurrection. The greatest power that exists in this world is death. No one escapes death. Yet the Bible tells us that death will be the last enemy of Christ to be destroyed (1 Cor 15:26). The death of death is certain because the resurrection of Jesus has already taken place. He died and now he lives, therefore, death is no longer to be feared by those who are in Jesus. Death is no longer the greatest power. Jesus' power is greater than the power of death. Jesus entered into death and killed it with the power of his life. The life of Jesus is more powerful than the death of this world. His life has overcome death which dominates this world. *We can experience his peace because his life is more powerful than death itself.*

It is the will of the enemy to steal, kill, destroy (Jn 10:10). Terrorism seeks to steal peace by killing and destroying. And it works. The evil of terrorism is obvious. Yet the god of this world, i.e. Satan, has blinded the minds of Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (and many others who believe that murder will be rewarded by God) by keeping them from seeing the glory of God in the face of Christ. They mistakenly believed that the glory of God is seen when they destroy those whom they deem sinners. They failed to see that sinners are those for whom Christ died.

While living in this broken world, we will assuredly have trouble, Jesus comes this morning to say that peace, *his* peace, can be an experiential reality. He has overcome the world. Take heart, he has overcome death and you need not fear it any longer.

This is what I think Jesus would say to his followers this morning.

What Jesus Would Say To Those Who Are Not His Followers

Second, I also think Jesus would have something to say to those who are not his followers. What would he say to them?

I think he would say, "Repent, or you will perish."

The reason I believe he would say this is because he did say this.

Tragedy often causes us to ask why? When we see people die in horrible ways, something within us innately cries out, "Why did this happen like this?"

Jesus was once questioned about the death of some Galileans whom Pilate had murdered while they were worshipping by offering sacrifices to God.

Luke 13:1-5, (ESV)

There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, "**Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.**"

Jesus clearly points out that dying a horrible death does not mean that that person was an unusually horrible sinner. He says all sinners deserve a horrible death. All people are sinners therefore all people deserve a horrible death. The answer to this problem is repentance.

Death is a tragedy, yet one who dies without repenting will perish, meaning his soul will be lost forever in the eternal flames of hell.³ The greatest tragedy is not physical death, but spiritual death. When Jesus uses the word 'perish,' he is referring to the soul's condemnation in hell. Listen to what he once said to his disciples.

Luke 21:16-19, (ESV)

¹⁶**You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all for my name's sake. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your lives.**

Notice that Jesus says, "**Some of you they will put to death**" (v.16) And then he says, "**But not a hair of your head will perish**" (v.18). Being 'put to death' is not the same thing as 'perishing.' These people to whom Jesus was speaking love the glory of his name more than peace with parents, family, and friends and because of their love for the name of Jesus, they will be 'put to death' but they will 'not perish.' Their bodies will die, but their souls will live.

No one will escape physical death, but some will escape spiritual death. They will do this through repentance. Those who would enjoy eternity with God must repent of their sins. Death will be experienced by all, but hell need not be. If you want to be welcomed into the presence of God, then repent of your sins today and ask Jesus to forgive you and cleanse your soul of all unrighteousness. John tells us,

³ See Mt 18:8; 25:41.

1 John 1:9, (ESV)

✦ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This is what I believe Jesus would say to those who are not his followers. Boston needs to hear the message of peace, but apart from repentance of sin, there is no peace with God. Apart from the atoning work of Jesus, there can be no true and lasting peace. *In this world we will have tribulation, but in Jesus we can have peace.*

We like to quickly move on when tragedy strikes. Moving on is good, but don't move on too quickly. Don't waste the pause of this week.

If you are his child, then receive his peace. If you are not his child, then receive his forgiveness.

Today, if you hear his voice, then do not harden your heart. In the recesses of your own soul, ask Jesus right now to forgive you of your sins and to help you turn away from all your sins. Ask him to save you from perishing. Ask him to give you new life and to lead you into a new day.

Now receive his forgiveness. Believe it. Believe that if you ask him to forgive you of your sins, that he will forgive you of your sins.

May the peace of Christ be yours during these intensely troubling days. In this world you will experience trouble, but don't be troubled by this. May his Spirit cause you to experience his peace.