THIS COULD BE OUR FINEST HOUR

Text: John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

INTRODUCTION

- At 5:30 a.m. on May 10, 1940, Germany, with 136 divisions and a superior number of combat planes, began a massive attack against Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. The British Expeditionary Force along with the French, Belgian, and Dutch armies were attempting to defend these countries.
- The Germans troops had the latest technology as commanders utilized radio communication on the field and modern battle strategies. The Allies, however, were still employing a defensive World War I style battle plan, depending on a string of defensive forts. In addition, the commanders of the Allied troops did not have radio communication, but relied upon hand-delivered messages.
- After just a few weeks of battle, Hitler's armies had experience stunning victories. Holland, Luxembourg, and Belgium had fallen to Germany by the end of May. Paris fell on June 14th. Three days later France agreed to German rule in exchange for peace.
- It was during this critical time, on June 18th, 1940, that Prime Minister Winston Churchill stood to speak to the English House of Commons to discuss the terrible turn of events in Europe with the realization that Britan was now standing alone in the crosshairs of the seemingly unstoppable German military juggernaut.
- He gave an honest assessment of the situation, but there was never a hint of retreat or surrender in his words.
- In fact he ended this speech with this famous statement: "Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"
- We may not be in a world war, but church we are living in desperate times.
- Every day we get calls here at the church from people with heart rending situations in their lives.
• Every day we get calls from people who are at the end of their rope.
• They're without jobs, they're about to be put out on the street, they have no money for utilities, and they don't know where their next meal is coming from.
• We get these calls every single day.

• Unemployment is at levels we haven't seen in decades.
• The social upheaval in the country, the war, the unrelenting advance of the homosexual agenda, drugs, home invasions, robbery, rape, murder, gang activity, political corruption, and on and on . . . we are living in a world of chaos.
• This isn't just a Battle Creek thing, or a Michigan thing, or even an American thing, this is a global reality.

• So how should the church respond?
• The world is watching us.
• That's why they call the church when they're in trouble.
• They're looking at our lives and they're wondering if there is really any hope in Jesus.
• The people around you who are going through this chaos are watching your life.
• In these times of trouble the world is wondering if there is any discernible difference between them and us.
• As Jesus said, the fields are white unto harvest and the world is ripe for a message of hope and healing.

• This can be our greatest opportunity, or it can merely reveal the weak, compromising faith of some people who go to church every Sunday, but who do not shine a light of hope to those who are watching their lives.
• As Churchill said, we are not going to retreat, or give up, or surrender.
• If the return of the Lord should be today, or if His coming is not for another thousand years, I would hope that history would look back at this time, at this hour, and say of The Potter’s House Church, "This was their finest hour. This was when their light shone the brightest and their love was most evident."
I) THE CONTEXT

- The text I read from John's Gospel comes in the middle of a long discourse of Jesus in which He has revealed that He is about to be betrayed by one of His disciples (Jn. 31:21).
- In chapter 13, verse 33, Jesus tells the disciples that He is about to leave them: *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come;*

  - So given this context, you can imagine that the disciples were more than a little concerned.
  - Their Messiah, the One they have left everything to follow, the One in whom they had put all their hopes and dreams, this One has just said that one of their own would betray Him.
  - He said that He was going to be leaving and they couldn't go with Him.
  - Their world was being turned upside down.
  - Nothing was making sense to them.
  - They thought life was going in one direction and all of a sudden it seems to take a 90-degree turn in another direction.
  - They weren't emotionally prepared for this, but Jesus had been preparing them spiritually.
  - Every miracle, every lesson, every parable, every command, every example, everything they had seen Jesus do, or heard Jesus say, was preparing them for this very hour.
  - They just didn't know it yet.

- Life is like this sometimes, isn't it?
- We think we're going in one direction, and then stuff happens, life happens, and suddenly the job we thought we'd have for next 20 years is gone or the marriage is over.
- We thought we were prepared for what was ahead, but suddenly we feel like we're in a freefall, out of control, and we don't think we can take it.
- We don't think we can make it, but if we've been following Jesus, we can make it.

- You haven't been worshipping God in vain…
- You haven't been reading God's word for nothing…
- You haven't been praising Him for nothing…
• You haven't been living for Him for nothing…
• You haven't been sacrificing for Him for nothing…
• You haven't been faithful in tithes and offerings for nothing.
• You may not know it, but God has been preparing you, God has been equipping you, God has been getting you ready for your finest hour.

II) THE PROMISE

• Jesus doesn't just tell them that He's leaving and then walk out.
• He promises them that He will not leave them like a bunch of orphans.
• He said, "But the Counselor, 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" (John 14:26, NIV).

• So first, Jesus promises that He will not leave us alone.
• We have the Holy Spirit who is here with us in the “mean” time.
• In the chaos He is the Comforter.
• In the confusion He is the Counselor.
• In the upheaval, He's the power.
• In midst of the lies and skepticism, He is the Spirit of Truth.
• When we don't know what to do He is our Teacher.
• When we don't know what to say, He gives us the words to speak.
• When we forget what we've been taught, He will remind us.

• So we have the promise of the Paraclete, that is, the Holy Spirit.
• But Jesus also promises us His peace.
• Look at what He said. This is important. He said, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you.”
  o The same peace that allowed Him to keep on keeping on…
  o The same peace that enabled Him to submit to the will of the Father in a time of trouble and emotional upheaval…
  o The same peace that allowed Him to look down from an old rugged cross and say, “Forgive them for they know not what they do”
• This is the same peace He is promising us in these times of chaos.

• I think the best picture we have of the peace that Jesus gives us is found in a storm.
Jesus and the disciples are on the Sea of Galilee in a small ship and suddenly a great storm comes up and water begins filling the boat.

- The disciples fight furiously to keep from sinking.
  - This is a desperate situation.
  - This is a live or die situation.
  - This is trouble.
  - This is a storm.
- So where is Jesus?
- Mark's Gospel says, "He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow."

This is the peace that Jesus gives us.

- It may be a storm, but He's the master of the sea.
- It may be a tempest, but He's the Peace Speaker.
  - He's not worried.
  - He's not wringing His hands.
- The Bible tells us that the disciples woke Him and said, "Master, do You not care that we are perishing?"
  - What did Jesus do?
  - He didn't freak out.
  - He didn't say, "Oh my God! Oh Me! What are we going to do?"
- What did Jesus do?

Mark says in verse 39, "Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!'"

- What did He do?
  - He got up, looked out over the storm, took authority and spoke peace into the situation.
- That's the kind of peace He has, and that's the kind of peace He has promised us.
  - He said, "My peace I give you."

What happened when Jesus spoke peace?

- "The wind ceased and there was a great calm."

He'll do that for you.

- In the storm you can be at rest.
- When the world is about to freak out, you can speak peace and bring calm to the situation.

Jesus has given you that authority.

- He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you
have no faith?”

- I don't know that Jesus is saying we can just go around commanding the weather.
  - If that were so the trees wouldn’t have fallen on my house.
    - It rains on the just and the unjust.
  - So what is Jesus saying here?
    - I think He is telling us that we can trust Him.
    - It may not look like He's doing anything at the moment, but we can trust Him.
  - We can put our faith in Him and He will always show up right on time with the power to speak to peace in the storm, to speak peace into our situation, to bring calm in a world of chaos and confusion.

### III) THE PEACE

- I told you that world is watching us.
  - People are looking at your life.
  - They are wondering if there is anything to being a believer.
    - Jesus didn't say the world would see the difference because we are exempt from the storms of life.
    - He didn't say they would see the difference because we're richer than they are.
    - He didn't say they would know the difference because we never get sick.
  - What did He say?
    - He said the difference is the peace.

- Look at the text.
  - Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

- Did you see that?
- He said the peace He gives is different from the peace that world gives.
  - His peace is not the promise of the absence of trouble or tribulation.
In fact, Jesus said, “In the world, ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).
- His peace isn't the absence of trouble, but it is the peace in the problem, the calm in the calamity, and the serenity in the storm.

This is the difference that is going to draw the world like moths to the flame.
- In the midst of the storms we have a peace that passes all understanding.
- When the rest of the world is slitting their wrists and jumping off bridges, the believer is still trusting and praising God.

Paul and Silas were beaten, put in stocks, and locked in the prison, but at midnight, a peace that passes understanding empowered them to pray and sing praises to God, until right on time, God showed up and opened the prison doors.

CONCLUSION

- There are storm clouds on the horizon.
  - There is trouble and strife on every hand.
  - This is a pivotal time in the history of humanity.
  - The world is being tossed to and fro in a sea of empty promises and broken dreams.
  - Jobs are being lost.
  - Lives are being wasted.
  - Blood is being spilt on the streets of our cities.
  - People are losing homes, and worse than that, the world is losing hope.
- But the church cannot retreat.
  - The church cannot surrender.
  - The church cannot compromise.
  - Instead, the church needs to show the world that there is hope and there is healing, but it won't be found in a man, it won't be found in another program, and it won't be found in the senate, in the courts, or in the Whitehouse.

- We need to let the world know that our hope is in the Peace Speaker.
• We need to let the world see in us a peace that passes understanding and we, as the church, need to bring a calm and a blessed assurance that God is still large and in charge and He is in control.

• What an opportunity for us to show the world that there is a difference.
• The difference is in the peace that we have in Jesus.
• It's peace, peace, wonderful peace, coming down from the Father above.
• We have come to the kingdom for such a time as this and my prayer is that if the Lord's return is not for another thousand years that history will look back and say of us, “This was their finest hour!”

• Are you ready to embrace this hour with the confidence and calm assurance that Jesus is our Lord and He will never leave us or forsake us?
• Are you ready for peace, His peace, a peace that passes understanding, and a peace that separates the believer from the world?
• If you're ready, then God is willing.
• All you have to do is receive it this morning.