

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj9A4klqbqY>

Peace, perfect peace is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Let us, as we join together, allow the peace of Christ to enter our hearts as we gently open ourselves to the presence of the spirit of God, in us and in one another.

Our help is in the name of the Lord

All who made heaven and earth.

**Most merciful God,
we confess to you,
before the whole company of heaven and one another,
that we have sinned in thought, word and deed
and in what we have failed to do.
Forgive us our sins,
heal us by your Spirit
and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.**

O God, make speed to save us.

All O Lord, make haste to help us.

**All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.
Alleluia.**

Psalm 91 vv1-7

- 1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High ♦
and abides under the shadow of the Almighty,
- 2 Shall say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my stronghold, ♦
my God, in whom I put my trust.'
- 3 For he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler ♦
and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4 He shall cover you with his wings
and you shall be safe under his feathers; ♦
his faithfulness shall be your shield and buckler.
- 5 You shall not be afraid of any terror by night, ♦
nor of the arrow that flies by day;
- 6 Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, ♦
nor of the sickness that destroys at noonday.#
- 7 Though a thousand fall at your side

and ten thousand at your right hand, ♦
yet it shall not come near you.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

The servants of the Lamb shall see the face of God, whose name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night: they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 22.4, 5

**Save us, O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep may rest in peace.**

Nunc Dimittis:

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace: ♦
your word has been fulfilled.

2 My own eyes have seen the salvation ♦
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;

3 A light to reveal you to the nations ♦
and the glory of your people Israel.

Luke 2.29-32

**All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Reflection

Jesus said:

“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”

No one needs reminding that we live in a very troubled world, riven by war, hatred, anger and killing. The world Jesus was born into was no different. Our appetite for killing seems insatiable. If we're not killing each other we're killing countless billions of sentient creatures for food or even just for fun. It sometimes seems quite mysterious how God still manages to love us. Probably only because God IS love. Love is the nature and being of God. God can only love. In Jesus God has given us the supreme example of how to live a life of love. And the final command of Jesus was that we love one another as he has loved us. If he has told us to do that it must be possible! As creatures we share in the nature of our Creator – we are made by love, for love.

How did Jesus respond to the violence, hatred and bigotry of his world? By armed resistance and retaliation? By fighting power with power? That is the way of the world but it was not the way of Jesus, not the example he wanted us to follow. He did not lead an insurrection against the occupying Roman army. He responded to the violence and cruelty of his persecutors with acceptance and forgiveness. He forgave the very people who crucified him. He experienced not just death but hell itself – he plumbed the very depths of human misery and alienation from God. As God still does. One definition of being a Christian is to willingly accept one's own share of the suffering of God.

Clearly we are not going to turn our swords into ploughshares any time soon. We must continue to live in a world addicted to killing and death. How is it possible to live in peace in such a world? To live a life of love in the way that Jesus did? Jesus was able to be at peace amid all the storms of life – even, it seems, to be asleep during them. He appears not to have been much of a worrier. He tells us not to worry about what to wear or what to eat and to leave to tomorrow the cares of tomorrow. He said this knowing what tomorrow was going to bring to him personally, and, only a little later to the entire Jewish people. He could be at peace amidst the horrors and tragedy of life.

What does peace mean for us trans people? Many of us have lived through our share of the storms of life. A little time ago I attended the Trans Theology conference in Manchester where the focus was on how trauma affects trans people. Some strategies were suggested for how to be healed from trauma. Trauma of course is not exclusive to trans people but almost a universal human experience. But for trans people it might take particular forms that can be hard to deal with. Some trans people find a degree of peace in coming out and transitioning. Some find that one form of trauma has been replaced by another: the pain of loss and rejection. Still others have to remain in the closet or perhaps make occasional excursions outside it before retreating once more. They have to bear within themselves an excruciatingly painful conflict or contradiction. It is truly a form of crucifixion. Some trans people long for gender-confirming surgery and hormone therapy but are either debarred by their circumstances, unable to afford the enormous cost of private treatment or faced with ferocious NHS gatekeeping and waiting lists stretching into the far future. Those of us privileged enough to be able to transition might find that, even if we have been able to somehow accept rejection by loved ones or by our church, we are subject to numerous micro-aggressions that are over time deeply corrosive and undermining.

I don't have a magic recipe for being at peace in such a world. Nor really did Jesus. He was reluctant to perform miracles and rejected calls for a "sign". He refused all temptations to power and steadfastly followed the path of humility and renunciation. As we all know it's not an easy path to follow. For trans people it might mean the abnegation of the privileges and status associated with the persona we created to hide behind. In that sense we have a head start on cis people. We have little choice but to recognise our woundedness, the ways we have been traumatised, broken....we know that God is not going to take away our "thorn in the flesh", no matter how often we ask. We know, like St Paul, that it is when we are weak that we are truly strong. God's power works best – perhaps can only work - in our weakness. It is in surrendering to the power of God, in trusting God, that maybe, like

Jesus, we can find peace. Not the peace of the world. A hard, difficult, painful peace. A peace that Jesus implied would be like a sword.

So let us know gather and prepare ourselves to offer our prayers to God from humble and contrite and wounded hearts, as we search for healing and peace.

Prayers

Dear Lord, we pray for all the needs of your fractured, broken world, for all who have been hurt and suffered trauma, bereavement and loss. We pray especially for all who live in Ukraine, Gaza, Israel, Lebanon and Sudan, for all whose lives have been devastated by the horrors of war. We pray for all who seek peace and reconciliation and an end to bloodshed, killing and retaliation.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We pray for all trans people, especially those living in countries where they are persecuted and criminalised. We pray for those who despair of ever being able to live as their authentic selves, for all who have suffered rejection by loved ones and friends or by their churches.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We pray for all who seek peace amid the storms of life, that you will shelter and guide them.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We pray for all who cannot find meaning in their sufferings, who have neither faith nor hope, all who feel unloved, that you will help them to discover that the supreme expression of love is shown by Jesus in agony upon the cross.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

We bring to you in prayer the needs of all who are sick or in distress in mind, body or spirit, especially those known to us.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer

Let us know quietly allow the peace of God to be present in us and among us.

The Collect

Visit this place, O Lord, we pray,
and drive far from it the snares of the enemy;
may your holy angels dwell with us and guard us in peace,
and may your blessing be always upon us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Conclusion

In peace we will lie down and sleep;
All for you alone, Lord, make us dwell in safety.

Abide with us, Lord Jesus,
All for the night is at hand and the day is now past.

As the night watch looks for the morning,
All so do we look for you, O Christ.

The Lord bless us and watch over us;
the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us;
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace.

All Amen.

Benedictus from the Missa Solemnis:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ5BYXo-F9Y>