

Rev. Janet R. Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
Sunday, March 22, 2026  
Fifth Sunday in Lent  
Scripture: Matthew 5: 1-12; John 11: 1- 45  
Sermon: Peace in the Chaos

Do you ever feel alone in the storms of life? In Matthew 8: 24-27, the disciples found themselves in the center of a furious storm.

*“Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!’ He replied, ‘You of little faith, why are you so afraid?’ Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. The men were amazed and asked, ‘What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!’”*

Jesus was sleeping like a baby on the boat. Maybe for you, that’s what life feels like right now—a furious, chaotic storm. To make matters worse, it might feel like God doesn’t care, He’s asleep, or worse—He’s abandoned you. When the storms of life are raging, we can’t mistake God’s silence as His absence.

Once the disciples woke Jesus up and cried out to Him for help, Jesus rebuked the wind and waves until it was completely calm. When we call upon the name of the Lord, He holds the power to calm the raging storm of our lives, but more importantly, our hearts. Even if our circumstances change, God holds the power to bring the storm in our souls to a whisper. There is peace in His presence.

We all experience moments when our world seems to crumble. Whether it’s a devastating natural disaster, a serious illness, a tragic event, a death in our family or even watching our news and the chaos in the world we live in, we all experience moments when our world seems to be falling apart or chaotic and more anxiety than peace. From juggling

work and family commitments to dealing with unexpected challenges, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and out of control.

Isaiah 54:10 reminds us that even when the mountains are shaken, there's a powerful promise that remains unbroken. It's a promise of God's unwavering love, a covenant of peace that transcends life's earthquakes.

*“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.*

*~ Isaiah 54:10 (NIV)*

But how do we find peace in the midst of chaos? How can we be unshakable when life's tremors threaten to knock us off our feet? Maybe you have felt emptiness, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction after knowing the peaks of contentment and you are wanting the peace of God.

The world seems to be spinning with fears right now, fear of conflicts and wars, fear of losing jobs or businesses, fear of financial hardships, fear of the pervasive anger and division among people, fear of losing friends over differing opinions, and fear of an uncertain future. It's a lot to carry, isn't it? Sometimes, it feels like the list of worries is never-ending and the world is full of chaos.

It makes me wonder whether there will ever be a day where there will be peace on this earth and yet I know there is hope. The good news of the Gospel is that even with the brokenness we see in the news, even with the many instances of injustice and war, there is a hope that can only be found in Jesus Christ. That's why we are studying the Beatitudes this Lent because the ideals that are taught in it are to be lived out by every follower of Jesus Christ .

The Beatitude we are looking at today is, **“Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God”**.

So what is a peacemaker? Well they are not peacekeepers. They don't just become involved in maintaining peace in a toxic atmosphere and that somehow without them the commotion of unrest and violence will erupt again. Peacemaking is risky and it requires action. A peacemaker is someone that promotes peace in their life and in the community even at the cost of their own reputation. It's not a

maintenance function that occurs when something needs to be resolved. Instead it is an active process to go, risk and make. Because when we are busy making peace, the shalom that Jesus speaks of, we are emulating him, and we become children of God.

That theme of peace then flows throughout all aspects of Jesus' sermon. Jesus will talk about forgiving others, he will talk about loving your enemies, he will talk about how to treat those that do something wrong to you. All he is doing is telling us what it is to be a peacemaker. Notice that Jesus doesn't depend upon any of the authorities around him, the government or education, to help with the process of peace. He knows that the only one to teach peace are the people who know the Prince of Peace. So if you are looking for peace then begin by knowing Jesus. For us today if we claim Jesus as our Lord, then we must recognize that we carry His peace within us.

Jesus blesses us if we are his peacemakers because he is the ultimate peacemaker. Romans 3:23 says, *'For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God'*. But the grace of God was so incredible that God realized that no one could take on the role of peacemaker other than Jesus through his life and salvation. Jesus rose from the despair of death so that you and I could be in peace with God. That's what Paul tells the church in Rome in Romans 5:1 He says, *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"*.

When seeking to find peace in the midst of chaos, we must remember that God has made a covenant of peace with us. This means that His peace is not temporary or conditional. It's an unceasing and unconditional gift available to us at all times even when chaos feels like it is overwhelming in our lives. We can embrace this covenant by trusting in God's faithfulness and committing ourselves to His ways. By doing so, we can experience true peace even in the midst of chaos.

In the midst of a catastrophic, life-altering event, it's easy to feel disconnected from God. We often experience anger and frustration born from questioning why God allowed such tragedy into our lives. But it's precisely in these moments that we need His presence the most.

Instead of withdrawing because we're hurt, we must actively seek Him for our healing and peace. By reminding ourselves of His covenant of peace, we can shift our focus from our own pain to the power of our compassionate God.

It's important to recognize that His power remains unshaken, even when our faith wavers. When we realize that God's promises are not subject to change and His compassion and power aren't subject to change, our hearts find assurance and tranquility—peace in the chaos. His peace becomes our anchor in the earthquakes of our lives.

Seeking to find peace in a world full of chaos can feel like an impossible task. But as we remember God's promise to never let go of us and embrace His covenant of peace, we can stand unshakable in the midst of life's tremors. It's not about avoiding chaos or being immune to its effects, but rather finding peace despite it. By grounding ourselves in faith, clinging to His promises, and seeking His presence, we can experience the unshakable peace that only comes from a deep and unwavering relationship with God.

Stand firm in our faith, knowing that even when mountains shake and hills are removed, God's love and peace will remain with us always.

Our scripture lesson from John 11 reminds us of the chaos we feel at the death of a loved one. Martha and Mary are grieving the death of their beloved brother Lazarus. It's not hard to imagine the questions that might be running through the minds of the disciples and the hearts of Mary and Martha. Why? How could this happen? What's next for me? Is this an ending or a beginning? Could it be both? How do I move forward? How do I make sense of what has happened? What will life be like now? Why didn't it work out the way I wanted? What could or should I have done differently? Is there life after this? Why didn't God do something? Every one of you could add to this list. We all have our questions, thousands of them. Our lives are filled with unanswered questions.

Mary and Martha who live in Bethany were some of Jesus' closest friends. They send word to Jesus that their brother is desperately ill. "Please come. We need your help. Hurry." But by the time Jesus gets there, Lazarus has died and has been in his grave for four days. Mary and Martha come out to meet Jesus and they express their grief: "He's

gone. We've lost him. O Lord, if only you had been here, our brother would not have died."

Stress does unusual and even extraordinary things to the mind and body. When stress, anxiety, grief, or trauma appears due to some kind of event in our lives, our body shocks our minds into a kind of high alert syndrome. This can include emotional reactivity, cognitive issues, insomnia, increased suspicion of threat, tension, brain fog, worry, and even anger!

The family and friends have gathered and in their deep sorrow, they begin to weep over the loss of their loved one, Lazarus. The heart of Jesus goes out to them and Jesus weeps with them. He loved Lazarus, too and he loves them and he shares their pain.

Martha goes out to greet Jesus when he comes and says to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus assured Martha, "Your brother will rise again." Martha affirmed her faith in Jesus even in the midst of the pain and the chaos. Martha said, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, ***"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*** Again Martha affirms her faith in Jesus. ***"Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."***

Jesus goes out to the tomb and he says to them: "Roll back the stone!" Martha, always the realist and ever ready to speak out, protests: "But Lord, we can't do that. He has been in the grave for four days. By now there will be a terrible odor." Jesus says to her: "Martha, only believe and you will see the power of God."

So they roll the stone away... and Jesus cries out in a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!" And incredibly, miraculously, amazingly, before their very eyes Lazarus is resurrected! He comes out of the tomb. He still has on his grave clothes. His head and feet are still wrapped with mummy-like bandages. Jesus then turns to the friends and family and says to them, "Unbind him and let him go. Unwrap him and set him free."

In this graphic and dramatic story, three great truths emerge which can be so helpful to us today. First, Jesus wept with those he loved, and he still does. Second, what Jesus does gives witness and power to believing in his name. Third, he included others in the healing process, and he still does in communities of faith around the world.

So when chaos inevitably strikes, remember Isaiah 54:10 as a reminder of God's love, his covenant of peace, and the unchanging strength that comes from trusting in Him.

“Though the mountains be shaken  
and the hills be removed,  
yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken  
nor my covenant of peace be removed,”  
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

So let us hold on to His promises and stand firm in our faith, knowing that even when mountains shake and hills are removed, God's love and peace will remain with us always.

Jesus is Lord of a kingdom characterized by peace. And Jesus has established everlasting peace within his kingdom through his death on the cross. Peacemakers, then, are those who do the tough work of pointing others toward the peace of Jesus, fill others with the hope of his coming kingdom, and work to display Jesus' peace on earth through word and action as a sign of the kingdom in our midst.

We have been called to promote and make known the peace that Jesus provides.

In the face of conflict and pain, Jesus did not retaliate. He overcame evil with good. Through his death, he established the peace of God in the midst of a world consumed with hatred and violence. Jesus calls all who follow him to take up their crosses (Matthew 16:24) and follow him. We aren't to withdraw from conflict but remain present in a different way, meeting evil with good and hatred with love.

Martha's statement is clearly an affirmation of faith. “Yes, Lord,” she tells him. “I believe you are the Messiah.” Can we say that as well in the midst of chaos?

John finishes the story by reminding us of the reason he wrote this gospel in the first place: *“Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.”* (John 11:45)

Jesus is waiting, weeping for you to receive his love and forgiveness. Jesus is offering you a new chance at life – life that is abundant and filled with peace.

**“Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God.”**

As followers of Jesus go forth and model peace!

Jesus said 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.”* (John 14:27)