

Two Kinds of Peace
Sunday, December 4, 2022, 10:00 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena
Luca DiMassa

Good morning All Saints! My name is Luca DiMassa. For those of you at home, make yourself comfortable, and here at church you may sit down.

I'd like to tell you the story of when I went to a sleep away camp this past summer on Catalina Island. Actually, I would like to tell it to you through the story of two journeys.

The first journey was the drive I had when I was surfing on the other side of the island. Now, first let me set the scene. By random chance I got into surfing class, which I really wanted, and which was crazy because there were only four surfing classes, each with around eight kids, in a summer camp with 250 people. Add on top of that surfing was the most popular class AND that it was reserved primarily for the 16-17 year olds, and I was 13, the fact that I got into this class defies all odds. Anyway, when I was getting ready for the first surfing class I felt super lucky, but also super nervous, because I could not surf at ALL. I mean, I know I am a SoCal kid, but the only time I had been surfing before this I had always ended up slamming into the water and getting an insane amount of salt water up my nose. So, when I hopped into the van to go to the first surfing class I was really nervous, especially because I knew most of the other kids would be way better than I. Just because they call them classes doesn't mean that the people there aren't experts. We started to drive, and I began to realize how long of a car drive it was going to be, and I thought it was going to be a nerve-wracking one, stressing about the ocean to come.

But, as we began to ride, I got less and less nervous. I really don't know why. Maybe it was the way the sun spilled through the windows and made everything warm, but not hot.

Maybe it was because of the gorgeous rolling hills, and the bison standing there, eating grass as calm as can be. Maybe it was because I knew I didn't have to deal with any homework or chores or any of the other things I had to deal with when I got home. Whatever it was, I wasn't feeling apprehensive or distressed, I just felt serene and at peace with myself, no longer worried about silly things like embarrassing myself while surfing.

The second story of a journey at camp also came when we were on the water, because it was pirate day for everyone in basic sailing. Yes, you heard that right, basic sailing - I also am not great at sailing. Anyway, Pirate Day was the last day of sailing class. We had all learned the knots and the vocabulary. We had learned how to steer in the water so we didn't hit the rocks and land so we didn't flip over the boat. We were ready for pirate day. Now, the point of Pirate Day was to flip other boats. What could go wrong, right? Just a group of teenagers, some very heavy sailboats, and free rein to flip each other over. Actually, everything was fine, no one got hurt. Anyway, I volunteered to sail in a boat by myself. I was super excited to show off my amazing sailing skills. I was going to turn and weave around all the other boats and be a fantastic sailor. Then I got on the water, realized I couldn't leave the boat by itself and had no one else on the boat to protect me, and promptly got flipped twice in a row. I was feeling really annoyed after the second time my boat got flipped and I was tossed into the freezing cold water where I had to unflip my boat by myself, which involved tons of swimming and getting almost hit in the head a lot by the boat.

I was feeling really bitter towards the kids who had flipped me over both times. I started sailing around and kind of plotting with the other boats about how to flip them. I sailed close,

one of them hopped on my boat, and I kind of just sailed away as he hopped back on his boat in one of the most disappointing almost-action sequences of all time.

After a while I kind of thought, what am I doing? I mean, it was pretty obvious I wasn't going to flip them, and I was pretty sure everyone else was too weighed down with two or three people in their boat to catch me off-guard and flip me again. Attacking them wasn't going to change anything, and I was actually pretty glad I fell in the water because it was getting super-hot. So, I started to just kind of sail away from everyone else. I sailed until the end of class, and it was the most fun I had. I did donuts and started going super-fast as the wind kicked up. All in all it was the most enjoyable part of class because I wasn't fighting with everyone else.

I think these two journeys reflect two kinds of peace . The first story represents the peace we happen to find with ourselves in quiet moments and the peace we have to find when the world seems to scream at us. I think this is the kind of peace the woman in Isaiah 54 found.

“Do not fear, woman
for you will not be ashamed woman;
do not feel humiliated woman
for you will not be disgraced woman.
For the shame of your youth woman,
you will forget woman,
and the stigma of your widowhood, woman,
you will never remember”

She had to rise above the people who judged her and hated her. She had to love herself, find peace with herself, and move on.

The sailing story represents the kind of peace we find with others. This is the kind of peace people must find with each other to survive, and entire peoples must find with each other to thrive. This is the kind of peace we wish for and talk about on the news and in the streets. This is also the kind of peace the woman in Psalm 113 helped other people find.

“She takes up the weak out of the dust

and lifts up the poor from the ashes.

She sets them with the rulers,

with the rulers of her people.

She makes the woman of a childless house

to be a joyful mother of children.”

She helped those who were hurting through hard times, so that they could love each other and find peace.

As I wrote this, I kept thinking about what my big message was going to be. Which kind of peace was I going to say was the better one, the most important one? Is it more important to have peace with yourselves, or others I wondered? I thought about what I wanted to tell a room full of people. And then I decided that I wouldn't. I'm 14, I'm not going to lecture you or tell you what to do. How you find peace is your decision.

For me, I feel like making peace with others has been a constant part of my life while growing up. At school especially, making peace with others was always there, in the corner, and I felt that conflict was trying to be avoided at all costs. In lower school their favorite thing to say was “You don't have to be best friends with everyone, but you do have to be kind.” And that's

totally right, you should be kind, but I also think that kind of overshadowed inner peace for me. When you focus on how you are with other people, I think that it is very easy to lose how you treat yourself. Now that I'm growing up and finding out who I am, inner peace is becoming more important for me, because it has let me be me, and be proud of who I am.

I feel that on one hand, it is important to have some level of peace with yourself, because you certainly shouldn't hate yourself. I mean, I know it feels like everybody today is always talking about self-love, but I truly think it is one of the most important things for mental and physical health. But, if you feel too much comfort with who you are right now, you might never be challenged to change, to become the best person you can be, and to help create a world where others can find peace. It is important to find peace with others, so you can build together and work together, and lift each other up. But peace doesn't mean always agreeing. If we never challenge each other's ideas, how do we stay innovative? If we always go with flow, eventually the river might go the wrong direction.

I do still think that finding that peace and calm is most important, so that we can love each other and ourselves. How do you need to find peace this holiday season? Do you think inner and outer peace are mutually exclusive? Do you need to find peace to help find love and joy?

Whatever your answers are, I do hope you try to find some calm as the fun but chaotic holidays approach. Whether that be with yourself and a nice mug of hot chocolate, or with family you haven't seen in a long time, try to find time this Advent and Christmas season to find love and peace. Thank you.