



*"All this I have spoken while still with you.
But the Advocate, 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.
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 14:25-27*

Four decades after his death, an obscure Scottish sprinter named Eric Liddell became a household name after the Oscar winning movie "Chariots of Fire" profiled his heroics in the 1924 Olympic Games. The movie told of Liddell's strong Christian convictions; his competitive spirit that was harnessed by his love for God; and his decision to drop out of the Olympic 100-meter dash because the race was scheduled for Sunday, a day he believed was to be a day of rest for Christians. As you might imagine his faith convictions were a surprise, but the big shock was yet to come. Liddell ended up stunning the sports world when he made the decision to compete in and win the Olympic 400-meter race – an event he had not intended to even enter.

The actor who played Liddell in the film, Ian Charleson said, "What I admired about him was his serenity. My whole personality changed during the time I was doing the part. I became very slow and concise."

As many authors tell his story, it seems that after his Olympic victory Liddell returned to China where he continued his work as a Christian missionary. When war broke out, he and other westerners were rounded up by Japanese troopers and held as "civil prisoners." During Liddell's two years in the camp, he was cut off from his wife and children. Liddell worked long hours – with little complaint – to organize a sports and recreation program for teenagers. He also helped people in any way he could and tutored students at night.

Sadly, toward the end of the war, Liddell, at the age of 43, died fighting the onslaught of a brain tumor. But he died the same way he always ran – fighting for every inch on the outside, but at peace inside. Eric Liddell knew by experience the kind of peace Jesus promises those who follow Him.

I wonder how many of us have experienced that same kind of peace Eric Liddell knew? Has our faith allowed us to go there? To feel that deep sense of calm and serenity in our life?

Peace is not something that in recent days I have seen with any regularity. Rather, from my viewpoint, it's been much the opposite. Far too many are living lives that seem to be demonstrating extreme levels of anxiety, fear, and resentfulness. But it's the anger, the lack of peace, that I have witnessed these last days that concerns me the most.

This past week I was in line with about twenty other people waiting to enter Target. As I was standing there, an older woman in a motorized wheelchair came up onto the sidewalk. Immediately she started toward the door area when she was bluntly told to go to the back of the line. Being next in line – I immediately responded, “Oh, that's not necessary, she can go in front of me.” You see, I was next in line and he had just motioned for me to enter the store. Well, evidently that was not normal operating procedure. The attendant immediately gave me a glare and sarcastically said, “Only if it's acceptable to everyone else in line.” What?? Before I even turned around to see what support I had, I said, “Well of course it's going to be fine with everyone else.” But that wasn't acceptable. I stood there, for what seemed like forever. Again, I said, “Sir, I would like to give my spot to this woman, so she can enter the store.” Was I really asking that much? Was my concern for this older woman and my willingness to help her really that far out of the acceptable? Why was this Target employee getting this angry over someone trying to help someone? Shouldn't we all want to help her? Finally voices from behind me began to join in, “It's fine – let the woman go in the store.” And with that came an angered pointing toward the door and a very sarcastic, “Just go!”

Short fuses, sarcasm, and lack of empathy seem to be on the rise. I wish Target was my only example from a week in our world, but unfortunately it is not. We see it on the news; in the way people are treating one another; on the roadways; the grocery store; and even within the family. Some are explaining it away as cabin fever, fear of what's to come, the effects of loss – and all of that may be true. But no matter what the cause, the end result is the same – our world is absolutely in need of a sense of peace right now.

But what about you? What is it that you are currently wrestling with? Do you have the need for a greater sense of peace?

In the midst of my disappointment this week, I was reminded of something very important. Even though I don't have the power to instill a sense of peace in others, I do have the ability to monitor my own and to effect a change there. And that is really true of all of us. So, I encourage you to pay attention to those moments this week. If they come, take the time for a little “personal retreat” with your Lord. Take a deep breath – perhaps a few – and then take some time to pray, perhaps read some scripture, and just quiet your soul.

Prayer

Dear Lord, teach me to trust in You so that when the unexpected storms of life come, I will expect peace in the midst of those storms, knowing that You are near, You hear my cries, and You are with me and for me. Amen