

Sunday, November 10, 2019

Psalm 121

Isaiah 2:2-4

John 20:19-21

Sacrifice for Peace

If we carefully read the stories in the Bible, we will come across several groups of people who were in conflict and battling with neighbouring countries time and time again. The results of these wars did not meet the people's needs but did eventually lead to peace negotiations in order to keep land which had been handed down from one generation to another. We also read that in many situations in biblical history, the times of peace did not last. In fact there has always been wars and battles between different nations because each group is seeking to be more powerful than others and they each wanted to live on the land which was home and proclaimed to be the Promised Land. Yet God created us all to be unique and equal partners and to share in His creation. When we consider the number of peace documents which have been signed at different times in history, those involved had good intentions but wars still exist because of different ideology, and power and intentions. Yet for most people, all that is desired is to live in peace because when war ends there are no winners. Only those companies producing items for battles, armies and all the equipment that is require may consider this good but many people die, or return home and their lives are never the same. It is these men and women whom we remember and honour today. We also honour those personnel who are currently serving around the world and continue to define the role of peacekeeper wherever they go. For all have served with the intentions of making and keeping peace.

The prophet Isaiah (in ch.2) helps us to imagine what was hoped for one day. God would hear the cry of the people when they would worship God. Because of this, He would then teach them His ways so that they would walk according to God's laws. And in response, all weapons of destruction and death would be changed into tools and instruments which would in the long run benefit others. Isaiah writes," they will beat their swords into plowshares; spears into pruning hooks." Plowshares were the means by which fields were prepared for planting seeds. Pruning hooks were used to trim vines, trees and vegetation. By transforming swords and spears into agricultural machines, wars would end and together everyone would plant seeds not only for food, but seeds of hope for a better future of working and living together in peace.

We know that the weapons of modern day are much more sophisticated and kill quickly and usually more than one person at a time. What weaponry might we want transformed today? What are

the symbols of destruction which need to be turned into something useful? Weaponry has advanced technologically since the sword or spear with the rise of the bow and arrow through guns and machine guns, tanks and even bombs. Some people might even state that the weapons which cause much destruction- are the guns in the hands of the wrong people. But what other things would we want to transform into something useful and for the benefit of all? What are the current weapons killing many today? How would we transform the illegal street drugs which are killing people every day?

When we think of the veterans of the First World War which ended almost 101 years ago and what they endured in the trenches of mud and water we might say and say, never again. When we look at or remember the mere numbers of people who died to prevent a dictatorship from crossing the ocean and entering our borders, these men and women did an amazing thing- they sacrificed themselves for peace and for the life that so often we take for granted. They sacrificed their lives so that we might live without the threat of bombs, weapons and guns at our doors or on our streets. They sacrificed their lives so that we might be able to come and worship as we are right now.

They sacrificed so much for those who would follow. And there are those currently serving in the Canadian Forces around the world willing to do the same. We might wonder what might happen if we asked for others to do the same? Are we willing to sacrifice our time and gifts for others? Often many offers are made and many people want to, on a certain level but to fully sacrifice oneself and give up their lives—no. They might say it is a good idea/ for someone else to do this task but many ideas will not be carried into action.

We are grateful because veterans believe in action. They had to act for the sake of others and knowing that the sacrifice they made was a full commitment. Throughout the international conflicts of WWI, WWII, Korean, Afghanistan and certain areas where Peacekeeping duties are carried out, we must remember the sacrifice that these men and women made and continue to make for the sake of peace in this world. This poem whose author is anonymous enables us to realize the role of the veteran who helps us to remember this day:

It is the Veteran, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.

It is the Veteran, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the Veteran, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the Veteran, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.

It is the Veteran, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the Veteran, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.

It is the Veteran, who salutes the Flag,

It is the Veteran, who serves under the Flag,

To be buried by the flag,

So the protester can burn the flag. (Author: Anonymous)

Our reading from John 20 occurs the day of Jesus' resurrection in the early evening. The disciples were gathered together in fear when Jesus stands among them even though the doors were locked. Jesus frightens his close followers and says, "Peace be with you." They were taken by surprise even though they had heard Mary's story that she had seen him. So when Jesus appears, he says, "I'm, here- don't be afraid." They are in awe—here in front of them was the Risen Lord! Jesus knows that they are a bit apprehensive in seeing him so he shows them that it is really him by letting them see his hands and his side. They then are filled with joy. So Jesus says, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Their hearts previously beating quickly are now calm. They have peace within. Jesus then breathes on them His Spirit and by this they know that God is with them. They have been forgiven of their sins, their fears and are able to begin to serve the Risen Christ in new ways.

As we pause today to remember those who gave of themselves and sacrificed their lives for peace. We must give thanks to Christ who died for all so that we might live eternally. Through the actions of war and death there is hope and this is what we each need to hold on to- hope—for a better world which needs peace to happen now. For as the global climate crisis becomes further understand we need each other and not be at each other's doorsteps aggressively fighting over short term misunderstandings but looking together for the sake of peace. We remember and we give thanks for those who sacrificed for peace- now it is up to us to continue to pass this peace with hope and love in our hearts. Amen.