

Sunday, November 7, 2021

Micah 4:1-4, Philippians 4:4-7 and John 14: 1-6, 27

Peace Begins with You

We worship on this Remembrance Sunday not to glorify war or combat, battlefields, or wrongs and rights, but to lift up those who gave of themselves for the sake of future generations. History teaches us that there have been wars between nations for centuries and yet when there is a common enemy, there may come a time of peace. The prophet Micah envisioned a time when everyone would gather together tools of war and then these tools would be converted into tools of harvest. This would occur when people of different nations would no longer battle, but all would be at peace. This has not yet occurred in history. One can pray for peace and for the hope that “Neither shall they learn war any more.”

What is peace? It is not merely the absence of war because we know from our veterans that they did not return home the same they left and that the peace they were seeking for the sake of others did not resonate within them either. Many veterans did not speak of their experiences of war because of its horror and destruction, of lives lost and the trauma they experienced not just physically, but within. We know much more about mental health issues and disorders that exist because of trauma but there is an underlying desire to have peace. This kind of peace that endures amongst others for an infinite amount of time.

Many of you might recall seeing images of cities in lockdown this past year and half. The streets were quiet; no honking horns, no laughter, yelling, engines running and no one around. Yes this was peaceful on one level but were we really living life? Life was at a standstill and there are some people who think that this is what we need in order to be peace-filled- It is not. For when there is no movement, no interactions of people, and no laughter, it is not peaceful it is eerie and lifeless and lacks hope. So what is peace?

Jesus spoke with his disciples about God’s house where he would be going to prepare places for all who believe in Him. Thomas was not sure what Jesus meant by this and asked, “How can we know the way? Jesus answered by stating, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to God except through me.” Jesus then explains further how He and God the Father are one and it is through God that we may receive the promise of our heavenly home. “They were still confused as to what he meant by this as we often might be but one thing Jesus says and does is offer to them peace- His peace. Peace that is not of this world and human understanding, but His peace that enables us to be changed.

As we consider this time of Remembrance when we honour veterans and their families for their sacrifices, our desire is for peace= around the world and within each one of us. We need to start the world thinking about what peace looks like. What is your vision of peace and how are you living with and in peace in that vision?

As humans, we need to work, to learn and to teach others of the importance of peace. We need to recognize that peace comes from within our hearts and minds. It is in us if we believe. Peace comes in the midst of trials and may be found in many circumstances. We can experience peace as we serve others and as we live out the gospel and obey the commandments of God. If we are truly sincere in our repentance of sins, that is sharing with God those things we have done against his teaching, we will begin anew through the promise of forgiveness. When this occurs the promise of escaping the old problems, habits, sorrows and sins are gone. It is then that peace comes upon each one of us. This is the peace of Christ.

We greet each other with the words “May the peace of Christ be with you”. But what are we really saying? It is a blessing to another as Jesus offered it to his disciples. Christ’s peace is what will sustain our life now and in the days to come. It is a greeting, a blessing and most of all, it is the hope shared between believers that one day the Prince of Peace will call us home. When this occurs, we will experience God’s peace forever more.

So what are we to do in the meantime? From Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we read his plea to this community about what to do in order that they will grow in faith and understanding of Jesus. His exhortation or plea to the people is to support those who believe and lead them from their past in order to know Jesus. He then tells them to 1) rejoice in the Lord 2) let your gentleness be known 3) don’t worry about anything 4) pray to God about everything including prayers of supplication and thanksgivings. Paul’s reasons to do these things is so that the Peace of God will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. This means that when we focus on God share with others and pray regularly, God looks after us and protects us and this is greater than everything else.

So let us do this: rejoice, let gentleness be known- show we care for others, not worry and pray! It sounds easy to do but let us pause for a moment and reflect on what is happening in our world:

1) The pandemic is still affecting some countries more than others; not every nation has received vaccinations for its people and the time to share is now

2) International government leaders are striving to work together to us all out of the pandemic safely and without further deaths;

3) These same leaders are looking at the global economy and how people will be spending their money and wondering what kinds of things will be purchased and hopefully preventing a deep recession

4) Climate change is already affecting people- but now voices are being heard as island nations are visibly threatened to disappear; ice caps are melting and it is becoming warmer

5) The need for weaponry is held at bay in many countries but if there is a need for battle, some countries are more prepared than others pushing leaders to re-arm themselves

Yes, we need to pray continuously to God who is listening and overseeing our lives. God has been with the many generations before us, and is the hope we have for generations to come. We must place our hope in God because He loves us and will not give up on us. And it is through God, His Son Jesus and the Spirit which is moving amongst us now that leads us to peace= within and with others and prayerfully the world. But we must remember: Peace begins with you.

As Dr Wayne Dyer wrote: You get world peace through inner peace. If you've got a world of people who have inner peace, then you have a peaceful world.

Let us pray: God of grace and peace, we praise and thank you that we live in country of peaceful people because of the men and women who died years ago in order that we might live with peace in our hearts and in our every day life. Help us to reflect on what peace is and means for us in these days. Hear now our prayers for peace. Amen.