

Reflection for Remembrance Sunday, November 8, 2015

Based on Micah 4: 1-4 Swords into Ploughshares and

John 14: 23-27 Jesus brings us the peace that passes all understanding

Opening Prayer: God of Creation, who breathes into dust into that which is seemingly dead and who brings new life into the world, we pray your blessing upon us as we reflect on God's word for us this day. In the chaos and confusion of our thoughts and in the depth of our courageous discernment, may we know your abiding love. Amen.

All three of our readings this morning lift up themes of peaceful and harmonious living based on trust in a God whose steadfast and abiding presence is with us in all situations and all circumstances.

We began with our passage from Hebrew Scriptures today coming from the voice of the Prophet, Micah. Like his contemporaries, Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos, Micah was thought to have lived and walked with our ancient faith ancestors some 800 years before the birth of Jesus.

Also, like his prophetic colleagues, Micah understood himself to be about the business of speaking the truth in love; a word he felt his people, the people of Judah, needed to hear.

It's a beautifully evocative passage shot through with images of a peaceable kingdom where all might be welcomed to live in dignity and prosperity.

Trusting in God's great goodness to provide, Micah paints a vivid picture of a world where even weapons might be transformed and put to good use.

Following on from there we had our responsive Psalm, another reading lifting up hope-filled images of a God whose 'hand feeds' and who has the capacity to provide for all our needs.

Then came our text from John's gospel. Here in one of the final vignettes of Jesus' Farewell Discourse to the disciples, Jesus offers his followers a word of comfort and hope.

In a fear filled, chaotic, and turmoil filled context anticipating his imminent death, Jesus promise not to leave the disciples lonely. Instead he promises them he will send them a special friend, or advocate, God's Holy Spirit to accompany them.

This promise must surely have given the disciples a sense of hope and security to keep on hanging on despite of all the signs to the contrary.

Picking up on words offered at the beginning of Chapter 14, when Jesus reminded his followers: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." and "...In my Father's house there are many dwelling places..." Jesus says this: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.'

Reaching across the eons, to our time of Remembrance this morning, I take some hope in the soothing balm of such lofty images offered from the mouth of the prophet, Micah and from Jesus' words taken from John's gospel.

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.'

These words of comfort, words often spoken at memorial services, bring me some comfort this morning as I consider the chaos and turmoil of our lives in our own postmodern context.

Still, it is important to acknowledge how hard it is to hold onto those hopeful and comforting words as we hold them up against the light of all that seems dark and gloomy in the morning TV news or on the radio.

But, then is this not our call as followers in the Way of Jesus? To hold in tension two competing ideas at the same time- That being a lack of peace in our families, our churches, our communities, and in our world and to balance that with our hope-filled intention for our participation in the unfolding of God's peaceable kingdom both within and beyond the walls of this church. Being intentionally hopeful in our prayers, our thoughts, and our actions in the midst of the turmoil and chaos of everyday living often takes much more courage and wisdom than most of us can imagine.

Yet, here, we gather weekly seeking *to experience and be about* the peace of God which passes all understanding.

While it's abundantly evident to me that we, as humans, are far from done with exerting power over others-be it through war or privilege or insecurity, I know, too, that, in our heart of hearts, we all would pray for God's vision of Shalom to unfold in our midst. For all of that and more, I know and am exceedingly thankful for the very intentional way we gather together this day, in memory, in hope, and in genuine love for those whose lives were given in the hopes of a better tomorrow.

Though hope for a time when swords will be turned into ploughshares and when each one will indeed sit under one's own fig tree, continues to elude us, we do have this ministry and I am not discouraged.

I also know that there is more going on at any given moment than our own small efforts to the ministries of bringing to birth a re-vitalized church, a new era, and, indeed, a new world. With that in mind, I offer these final words from the Apostle, Paul's letter to the Romans that they might give us hope and faith as our sojourn as followers in the Way continues its perpetual unfolding.

Taken from Chapter 8, verses 18-25, let us pray that "...all things might work together for good, for those who love God...and who are called according to God's purpose." May it be so, amen.