

Malachi 4:1-2a

Psalm 98

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Luke 21:5-19

Sermon November 13th, 2022

God's Promise of Peace

In our gospel this morning, Jesus names the violence that he sees happening all around him (**Image One**: *Picture of people fighting in first world war*). Jesus names the violent insurrections against the Roman Empire that have tempted some of his followers to join. Remember, Jesus' movement is a nonviolent movement. Challenging the Empire and the religious leadership of the day through peaceful protest. Hoping to change how this leadership is ruling its people. Some of his followers have become impatient, as the Empire, the religious leadership, resist these changes. And so, want more immediate action.

Jesus names the destruction that will come from these violent insurrections. Their beloved Temple will be destroyed. Changing the way, they relate to God and to one another.

Jesus names the violence that comes when God's creation groans in pain. In Jesus' lifetime there are records of big earth quakes happening in and around the region he ministered to.

Jesus names the violence that comes with disease. For example, the marginalization, the violent mistreatment of people with skin diseases. Or the violent impact disease has on our own bodies.

Jesus names the violence that comes from the persecution the early believers faced from the religious leadership, as well as, from the leadership of the Empire, for proclaiming Jesus' peaceful but challenging message in their communities.

When we hear Jesus naming the violence all around him, we too, are moved to reflect on, and name the violence all around us (**Image One**). We too, are grieving over the fact that violence persists in our communities today.

For example, the breakdown of our beloved institutions somewhat due to our violent past. A past where we caused hardships for people. Will we too see the church as we know it fall? Will we need to change how we relate to God and one another?

Or, the polarized climate we live in, and how we are encountering more violent outcomes because of it (**Image One**).

Or, the natural disasters that seem to be increasing in intensity. God's creation groaning in pain. We think about the hurricane that hit Atlantic Canada this past month.

Or, the rise in communicable diseases that are having a greater impact on our lives. Sometimes a violent impact.

Or, the persecution we face for standing up for what we believe in.

This past Friday, we remembered the cost of war. The many people who were wounded and/or died due to these violent outcomes (**Image One**). The many people who gave their lives to save others from this violence.

This past Friday, we reflected on the wars that continue to ravage across our world. People wounded, dying, because violence is still prevalent in our communities today. Ukraine, Afghanistan, to name a couple.

In response to this violence, Jesus proclaims a kingdom unlike the kingdoms, the empires, we know. Jesus proclaims a peaceful kingdom where violence will be no more (**Image Two: Picture of people signing a peace agreement**). Where the sun of righteousness will rise, with healing in its wings.

In our gospel this morning, we hear an invitation to trust in God's promise that this kingdom of peace will reign over our lives, and one day, over our world in its entirety.

This past Friday, we remembered the cost of war, but we also, reflected on this vision of a world where violence is no more. A world where we experience God's promise of peace (**Image Two**).

Jesus invites us to trust in God's promise of peace, but also, to reveal this peace when we see it happening. Because we do have moments where we see God's peace at work in the world. We do have moments where people come together and resolve their differences through nonviolent means. Leading to truth and reconciliation. We do have peaceful protests out there where people are patiently trying to nudge our leaders to deal with conflict more peacefully. We do have bridge builders who create safe spaces for dialogue. Safe spaces where we can find resolutions on the issues we are dealing with. Like the soldiers did on November 11th, 1918 when the First World War came to an end. Where the guns went silent (**Image Two**).

We do have Jesus' crucifixion/resurrection story where the violence of the Empire did not prevail over God's vision of peace revealed to us in the resurrection of Jesus. Where death did not overcome life. Where Jesus stands before his disciples, wounds and all, ready to breathe new life into his nonviolent movement. His vision of peace for the whole of God's creation.

Throughout the New Testament writings, we see this vision of peace being proclaimed (**Image Two**). And when the violence seemed overwhelming, the early believers were invited to hope in Jesus' return. When peace would reign in its fullness. The early leaders reiterated over and over again that this violence would not last forever.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to bear witness to this peace even as we face the impacts that come from violence (**Image Two**). We are called to keep witnessing until God's promise of peace is revealed to us in its fullness.

Because God's peace will reign. Our fallen institutions will be made new. Our weapons will be turned into plowshares. Our broken relationships will heal. God's creation will finally be at peace. Our health will be restored. Our bridges will be plentiful. God's peace will reign.

Let us pray, gracious God, we pray that you heal us from the impacts of violence in our world. Give us hope in your promise of peace. And help us reveal and live out this peace giving people moments of the foretaste of the feast that is to come. In Jesus name we pray, **amen**.

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