

Advent 2
"Peace"

Isaiah 11:1-11 & Matthew 3:1-3

This morning, we lit the Second Candle of Advent, the Peace candle.

In Psalm 34:14, the Psalmist says: **"Seek peace, and pursue it,"** which is a worthy calling for us as God's people.

Yet, in our Advent liturgy this morning, we heard these words of lament from Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, as he wept over the city of Jerusalem, crying **"If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!"**

Which begs the question for us to ponder this morning, what are the things that Jesus understood that make for peace; that the Psalmist's says we are to seek and pursue, but Jesus laments that people did not recognize?

And is Jesus still weeping at our inability to recognize those things that make for peace in our time?

During communion, Karen is going to play the hymn "Let There Be Peace on Earth." The lyrics prayerful say, "and let it begin with me."

If there is to be "peace" on earth, and it is to begin individually with each of us, what steps are we taking in our lives towards making peace on earth a reality?

And as we close the service today, we will once again be sing "Canto de Esperanza" or the "Song of Hope" with these words: "praying, let us work for peace."

So, how are we, together, working for God's peace in our community? In our area? In our nation? In our world?

In Jesus' farewell discourse in John's Gospel, he says to the disciples and to us: **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives."**

So as followers of Jesus, this "Peace" we are to seek and pursue, and work for together that begins with us, is not a peace Jesus says, that is defined by the values of this world or of our nation or even our own human ideals.

In Hebrew, the word for "peace" is "Shalom". Shalom is about the inward sense of completeness or wholeness. Like it, the Arabic word is Salam,

which is also about peace, seeking hope for world peace by bringing an end to violence and war.

God's peace is one of Shalom and Salam. As followers of Christ, this peace then is fully incarnate in Emmanuel: God-with-us, Jesus.

In lamenting what the people missed that made for Shalom/Salam/Peace was Love. Jesus had been showing them the things that made for Peace was through the gift of God's non-violent, welcoming love for all people.

Why people missed it was for the same reason we still miss it today - the pursuit of power, even using God's name and Christ's image in seeking it, twisting and distorting it, for our own purposes and for our advantages.

In the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5, Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Blessed are the peacemakers.

Ironically, American Industrialist and Inventor Samuel Colt created a single action army revolver nick-named the "Peacemaker" as the gun used to "win" the West, while killing many people, especially indigenous men, women and children.

There are many who feel that guns still are the best "peacemakers" in our American society.

"My peace I give to you," Jesus said, "not as the world gives it."

This weekend, we here in Cambridge are celebrating "Christmas in the Village." Of course, Christmas at the heart of it is about Christ's birth, which is about the gift of God's love incarnate. We lit the Advent candles as we did this morning, and remind ourselves of God's message of peace on earth, good will to all.

I mention Samuel Colt's "peacemakers" because this same weekend Jefferson is holding a gun show.

Gun Shows where people can buy "peacemakers" if you will.

How many of you went shopping on Black Friday? Did you know that one of the biggest items purchased on Black Friday for Christmas gifts are guns? Think of the irony of that. Guns bought as Christmas gifts given in the season when we celebrate God giving the gift of Love, Emmanuel, who the Scriptures refer to as the Prince of Peace.

So far this year there have been 611 mass shootings, a mass shooting defined as more than four people shot who were killed or wounded.

When Jesus said, Blessed are the Peacemakers, I don't think he was talking about Samuel Colt's gun or any gun.

"My peace I give to you, not as the world gives it."

Yesterday, we hosted a gun buyback event as a part of the National Guns-to-Gardens movement through the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and Raw Tools.

These movements grounded are in the scripture from Isaiah 2:2-5 "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks."

What we did yesterday was to live into those words of Scripture.

When we sing "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me", you did that yesterday.

When we sing, "Praying, let us work for peace" we were working for peace in our community yesterday.

This morning we lit the Peace candle on the Advent wreath, but yesterday, you were the light of the candle of Peace shining in a world filled with the darkness of gun violence, death, grief, sorrow, brokenness, in search of hope and healing and love.

As we ponder God's gift of Jesus and of peace this Advent, let's remember "justice and righteousness" are needed to keep ourselves and the entire web of life whole and at peace. Any single thing we do for peace will affect many people, many other issues in our community, nation and world.

What we as a congregation with other volunteers in our community with servants like Jeff Wild, Pastors Jennifer and Eric Jelinek, may seem a small thing, but it was helping to, as John the Baptist said, make straight the path of God, which is the path of peace.

You know, John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, after his son was born, spoke these words: **"By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."** (Luke 1:69)

May it be so in your lives and in the world we live. May God's light shine in and through you today as a source of comfort, healing, and peace to all whom you encounter in your lives this day and every day. Amen.