



Second Sunday in Advent December 8th, 2019

Waiting Peaceably



Welcome to the Second Sunday of Advent. Advent is the inaugural season of the new Christian year. In it, we adopt a posture of *waiting for* the Christmas event – the birth of Jesus and behind that, the kingdom of God: a new order of things marked by *shalom* - peace and *tzedakah* – justice.

Necessarily then, Advent is a bitter-sweet season. On the one hand, we acknowledge the brokenness of the world, which people bear, which we bear. On the other, we wait for something beyond this, to which we commit ourselves in the here and now. In a sense, Christians and fellow travellers, are like an outpost, an anticipation, a vanguard of the kingdom, of a better world, with restored human beings and restored communities.

Today, the emphasis is that of peaceable-ness: living in peace. The idea of peace or shalom, is not one of peace in a bubble, is not one of personal peace *apart* from others. Rather shalom is about engaged peace, peace in community *with* others, *for* others: it has to do in essence with right relationships. That does not suggest however, that the inner-life is not included. Clearly, to be an agent, a means of peace between people, there must be an inner maturity, an inner awareness, a capacity for critical self-analysis, which a connection with God – if it is a meaningful connection – should promote and enable.

GATHERING

Announcements

Invitation and Greeting

In the name of God
 In the name of the Son
 In the name of the Spirit

The Lord be with you
And also with you

We are here
in the name of Jesus Christ

Hymn: Sing of the Lord's Goodness (TiS 183, The Lord's Goodness, Ernest Sands)

Lighting the Advent Candle of Peace

Because we are enslaved by the drive to copy, to be 'better than'.
 Because we cannot accept
 that others may surpass us in natural ability.
 Because in frustration we resent those more gifted
 and scapegoat those we identify as inferior
 we light a candle of peace.

***Because hatred is still so strong.
 Because so many swords have not yet been beaten
 into plough-shares
 neither in our souls nor in our communities
 we light a candle of peace.***

(we light the second candle)

May the light from this candle overwhelm the world.

***May the light from this candle tell us that peace is possible
 within us and between us***

Let us pray:

O God
 we are a people on a journey,
 afraid of the unknown;
 conflicted in the wilderness of our lives.
 Accompany us through those experiences where we are left
 suspended, numb, perplexed.

Help us to discover you again in familiar and new ways.

Amen.

In our worry and despair, for you O God, we wait...
We wait...

When tears threaten to overwhelm us, we wait...
We wait...

When we long for a fresh start and newness of heart, we wait...
We wait...

When we consider the state of our world, we wait...
We wait...

When we have done all that we can, for you,
O God, we wait...

Amen

The Peace

SMG (Sunday Morning Group)

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

First Thoughts about Living Peaceably

Peace is the only battle worth waging."
Albert Camus

"Peace may sound simple - one beautiful word - but it requires everything we have,
 every quality, every strength, every dream, every high ideal."

Yehudi Menuhin

Let us not accept violence as the way of peace. Let us instead begin by respecting true freedom: the resulting peace will be able to satisfy the world's expectations, for it will be a peace built on justice, a peace founded on the incomparable dignity of the free human being."

Pope John Paul II

The pursuit of peace cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned."

Dag Hammarskjöld

Isaiah 11:1-10

Today's reading continues a theme from last Sunday's Hebrew Bible theme. As we look forward to Christmas we anticipate not just the birth of a child, the child, but the coming to fruition of God's new creation. In Advent, we prepare not just for Christmas but reign of God in human history. This broad vision is exactly what we hear in Isaiah 11: 1-9. The metaphor speaks of a utopia in both political and natural terms. Isaiah speaks of equity for the meek, justice for the poor, and the overcoming of the way power is abused in its imposition upon communities and the environment: both flora and fauna. This is a reading of great contemporary import.

11 ¹⁻⁵ A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump,
from his roots a budding Branch.

The life-giving Spirit of GOD will hover over him,
the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit that gives direction and builds strength.

He won't judge by appearances,
won't decide on the basis of hearsay.

He'll judge the needy by what is right,
render decisions on earth's poor with justice.

His words will bring everyone to awed attention.

A mere breath from his lips will topple the wicked.
Each morning he'll pull on sturdy work clothes and boots,
and build righteousness and faithfulness in the land.

⁶⁻⁹ The wolf will romp with the lamb,
the leopard sleep with the kid.

Calf and lion will eat from the same trough,
and a little child will tend them.

Cow and bear will graze the same pasture,
their calves and cubs grow up together,

and the lion eat straw like the ox.
 The nursing child will crawl over rattlesnake dens,
 the toddler stick his hand down the hole of a serpent.
 Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill
 on my holy mountain.
 The whole earth will be brimming with knowing God-Alive,
 a living knowledge of God ocean-deep, ocean-wide.

¹⁰ On that day, Jesse's Root will be raised high, posted as a rallying banner for the peoples. The nations will all come to him. His headquarters will be glorious.

Romans 15:4-13 (The Message)

Paul is dealing with tensions between Christians over the ceremonial food laws inherited from Judaism. Many, if not all the Jewish Christians considered such laws important to their new Christian identity, as they had been earlier, when they were members of the synagogue. Many non-Jewish Christians, however, considered them irrelevant and claimed that freedom in Christ liberated them from such externals. Paul, is more progressive in his thinking and tends to sympathize with the 'liberals' but he advises sensitivity toward the so called "weaker", more conservative believers, whose conscience does not allow them to surrender their rules. Ultimately, what matters, is living amicably together, as former insiders (Jews) and outsiders (non-Jews). All of them are Christians, and this self-understanding overrides all other divisions.

³⁻⁶ That's exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for himself by avoiding people's troubles, but waded right in and helped out. "I took on the troubles of the troubled," is the way Scripture puts it. Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it's written for *us*. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize *us*, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we'll be a choir—not our voices only, but our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master Jesus!

⁷⁻¹³ So reach out and welcome one another to God's glory. Jesus did it; now *you* do it! Jesus, staying true to God's purposes, reached out in a special way to the Jewish insiders so that the old ancestral promises would come true for them. As a result, the non-Jewish outsiders have been able to experience mercy and to show appreciation to God. Just think of all the Scriptures that will come true in what we do! For instance:

Then I'll join outsiders in a hymn-sing;
I'll sing to your name!

And this one:

Outsiders and insiders, rejoice together!

And again:

People of all nations, celebrate God!
All colours and races, give hearty praise!

The word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Matthew 3:1-12 (NRSV)

This is a well-known reading: John the Baptist heralding the arrival of Jesus. There are some many similarities between both men, but there are many differences as well, which we sometimes paper over. For the Christian community, each man belongs to a different aeon and different ethos (see the notes in the newsheet). John anticipates the Kingdom of God but Jesus incarnates it, gives full expression to it. For John violence, God's violence, has a role to play, but for Jesus, God has no violence in him...only liberating love.

3 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”³This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”⁴Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.⁵Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and

will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel (TiS 265, Veni Emmanuel, Anon, Latin)

Muriel's Wedding

Muriel's Wedding is one of the quintessentially Australian movies: funny but tragic, life giving but also death dealing, as ample space is given to examining the social dynamics and relationships of a small-town community, “Porpoise Spit”.

Muriel Heslop, a socially awkward young woman, is the target of ridicule by her shallow and egotistical ‘friends,’ Tania, Cheryl, Janine, and Nicole. She spends her time listening to ABBA songs and perpetually daydreams of a glamorous wedding to get her out of the dead-end town of Porpoise Spit and away from her domineering father, Bill, a corrupt politician who constantly belittles his wife, Betty, and five children.

In the clip, Muriel on an island holiday – an attempt to become acceptable to her ‘friends’ – meets an old friend from school Rhonda Epinstalk, with whom she teams up. Together, in a contest, they sing the ABBA song, “Waterloo”, which in a sense, is all about the struggle of relationships and the fear that Muriel carries within herself of subjection at the hands of others. Right relationships is what she yearns for, but never experiences. (24:57-29:09)

Some Thoughts about Peace as a verb

Offering

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

Prayer of Dedication

Act for Peace: “The Rebuilding of Sri Lanka – Transforming its Memory”. In this clip, we hear about the recent history of tension and civil war between Sri Lanka Tamils and Sinhalese. Florina tells us, “To be poor and homeless is one thing. But to be a refugee, poor and homeless is definitely something else.”

https://www.actforpeace.org.au/www_AFP/media/Christmas-Bowl/CB19-Resources/CB19-03-SecondSundayOfAdvent.mp4

Prayers of the People

The one who prays ends each petition with the words, *may we be people of peace*, and the congregational response, is *through how we live and what we do*

Lord's Prayer

Let us say the Lord's Prayer

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.***

***For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여
이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며
나라이 임하옵시며
뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이
땅에서도 이루어지이다.
오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고
우리가 우리에게
죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이
우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고
우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고

다만 악에서 구하옵소서
 대개 나라와 권세와 영광이
 아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

**Closing Hymn: O the deep, deep love of Jesus (TiS 232,
 Ebenezer, Samuel Trevor Francis)**

Blessing and Sending Out

Christ is life!

Let us live peaceably, disciplined, in love for others.
 Actively waiting for the incarnation of God among us,
 actively waiting for the kingdom

Our service has ended

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

**Going Out: Shalom (TiS 778, Somos del Señor, Elise Shoemaker
 Eslinger)**

We sing twice

Musical Postlude

Organist: