

## February 2010: SD Website

### BIBLICAL PEACE

Fellow Pilgrims:

Both Scripture and the *Book of Common Prayer* are full of the word peace. In worship, what does it mean when we say, “The peace of the Lord be always with you.”? Does it just follow the dictionary definition of peace? Is it freedom from war or civil strife? Is it peace of mind? Is peace only a treaty or agreement to end hostilities? Is it just freedom from public disturbance and from mental conflict? Could Biblical peace be something else? What is shalom?

In the Bible, many words describe peace. These include wholeness, well-being, abundance, prosperity, and a gift from God (Psalm 85). The well-being can be for the nation as well as for the individual. False prophets promise peace and prosperity without confronting the reality of the world, sin, and God. For examples of this, read Jeremiah 6: 13-30; Ezekiel 13: 15-16, and Micah 3: 5-12. In the Bible, a fool is one who says that there is no God. In the strongest terms possible, God denounces the façade of piety or religious observance, when the heart is not centered in love, justice, and righteousness (Amos 5: 21-24).

You gain peace or shalom when you fulfill God’s demands (Jeremiah 29: 10-14, Ezekiel 34: 25.) Read Isaiah 52: 7 for a definition of the Gospel—good tidings, good news. Peace is a synonym for the Gospel. The ideas of peace, Gospel, salvation, and the good life tend to be combined together (Isaiah 57: 16-21, 61: 1-2, 66: 12-13). In Isaiah 6, we find the prince of peace bringing peace. In Acts 10: 23b-48, we have the story of Cornelius, the preaching of the good news of peace (like Isaiah 52: 7), and the results of this preaching (i.e., the outpouring of the Holy Spirit). Remember, Peter needed a vision (10: 9-23a) from God so he would not let man-made laws get in the way of salvation.

In Ephesians 6: 15, we find the armor of God. Our feet are to be shod with the Gospel of peace. In Ephesians 2, the gospel is to be spread to those near and far. This gospel is one of peace or wholeness. Gospel peace is not serenity or lack of conflict. It is not necessarily harmony. In Luke 12: 51, Jesus says that He has come to divide. The Gospel of peace is tension and conflict. This is why we can say in the confession: “Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.” We are human, that is, finite and fallible. With the best of intentions, we create man-made institutions that can come between a person and God.

In the New Testament, peace is not a social concept, but a highly individual concept. Romans 5:1 and 8:6 talk about peace with God. Gospel peace is a lifestyle. We have peace from God and not from ourselves. We then are to be peacemakers—a desire for wellbeing. The enemy who disrupts our peace, that is, Satan and the forces of evil, has

been defeated (John 14: 1-7, 15-31; Isaiah 57: 14-58; Matthew 5: 9). To be a peacemaker means to take risks and to be willing to look foolish. To illustrate this, I am ending with a meditation from Lois Cheney's *God Is No Fool*.

“‘Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.’ That fool Noah did, and built a stupid boat on dry land for years and years, and man lived. That fool Job did, and the world kicked him and his friends did too, and so did his old religion, and he showed us a new face of God. That fool John the Baptist did, and he ate crunchy insects and dressed like a jerk, and baptized Jesus. That fool woman did; squeezing and elbowing through the crowd, just so she could grab at Jesus with her hand, sick, sick from years of a woman's sickness, and she was healed. But now we have aptitude tests, and counselors, and advisors, and rest camps, and psychiatrists, and lots of brains, and WE act. ‘Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him, and he will act.’ Lord have mercy on us. Lord have mercy on us.”

Lord teach us to ask and trust in You to act while we do the best we can. Help us to take risks for the Kingdom of God. Amen.

In Christ's love,  
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