

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jul 5th 2014

In reflecting on today's readings, I can't seem to get the words of the Psalm out of my mind: "The Lord speaks of peace to his people." Not only are they beautiful, lyrical words, but the message they convey is also one that I find we need very badly today.

Civil war continues in Syria, Iraq seems to be descending into chaos, unrest remains in Ukraine, violence is a constant part of life in Nigeria and Kenya, protests against social inequality were massive leading up to the World Cup in Brazil, and in the U.S. mass shootings seem to be an almost weekly occurrence. Our world is crying out for the justice and peace of which today's Psalm speaks.

Again, the words are quite beautiful and stirring, but I am also left with the frustration of the fact that, while the world can certainly use a message of peace, we also very much need real, concrete peace and I am only one person looking at issues that are as big as our globe. What is a person to do? Honestly, I don't know. I don't have an easy or all-encompassing answer to that question for myself, let alone anyone else. But I do think that God desires and invites us into a lived reality of peace and justice on this earth. And I believe God invites us to be people of peace. And it seems like this invitation is probably extended to us both personally and publicly.

Should I pray for an end to war and violence and injustice? Yes! Should I seek ways to further the cause of peace in my community, my nation, and in other nations whenever I see an opportunity to do so? Yes! Should I seek to heal broken relationships in my own life and always seek kindness rather than condemnation? Yes!

What brings all of this together is the belief, maybe the hope, that as we cultivate peace in our everyday lives and relationships, we will become people of peace, people of justice. As we seek this way of being in our lives and in the world, I think it's possible that new ideas and new approaches are needed, just as the gospel tells us. If we just continue with old paradigms in a new world, our efforts will be futile. What new dynamics are needed, what old hurts and misunderstandings need to be left behind as I seek peace in my personal relationships? What old talking points and religious, cultural, and political arguments need to be transcended as I seek the cause of peace in the wider world? These might be the "new wineskins" questions we need to ask ourselves.

When we integrate an attitude of peace and justice into who we are at the very core of our personhood, we don't know what the effects might be. My prayer today is that our individual kindness and truth, justice and peace will reach far beyond our own here and now, out into a world that is desperately in need of it.

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