

## Proclaiming Peace

[Isaiah 66:10-14](#)

[Galatians 6:\(1-6\)7-16](#)

[Luke 10:1-11, 16-20](#)

My sister-in-law told me that in the Church of England it is customary for a priest, when they enter a sick person's home to pray with them, to \*say "Peace to this house". It seems a nice idea and I thought I might do the same, but I have never managed it. Even when I remembered, it seemed somehow lame or pretentious. As if maybe I didn't have the authority to offer peace.

But that doesn't seem to have been a problem for the disciples – not just \*the inner circle but 70 or 72 of them. That's a bit like everyone who comes here to church on a fairly regular basis going out on mission. Everyone being sent out in pairs to say, 'Peace to this house!' and not just to mumble it but to say it with authority. To say it with the authority of the one who is coming, the one we are proclaiming, the Christ himself.

I have been wondering whether it would make a difference to say \* "Peace to this house!" when I visit someone, anyone even if they are sick or not. But I often meet with people at coffee shops so would I extend it to Starbucks or Nautical Bean?

Maybe so... if I felt I had the authority of the Christ to pronounce peace, why wouldn't I?

I suspect that my reticence to declare Peace is connected to a reticence many of us have about proclaiming the reign of God. In fact, it may be the same thing because what is the reign of God but the reign of Peace?

When others proclaim loudly that the reign of God is one where the \*health of women can be disregarded, that personal rights are not upheld by our constitution, that we can disregard the health of the planet because corporate profits are more important, or that owning assault

weapons is Biblically supported, it is difficult for us to say otherwise. We don't want to be associated with that kind of thinking and so we tend to feel uncomfortable even mentioning the reign of God in case we are misunderstood. Or in case we stir up a hornet's nest of anger.

Jesus knew that declaring peace wouldn't always be easy. "if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you," he tells them. Peace is not lost because it is not received, a blessing of peace continues to be a blessing.

Occasionally we sing hymn 661 which starts "They cast their nets in Galilee". I love this hymn. I love it for the last verse:

\*The peace of God, it is no peace  
But strife closed in the sod  
Yet let us pray for but one thing –  
The marvelous peace of God.

I love the way this encapsulates so simply the tremendous paradox of God's peace. No-one reading the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles could possibly imagine that following Jesus is a peaceful quiet existence of being in the zone without pain, struggle, suffering or strife. Jesus was crucified! As far as we know, most of the twelve also had nasty painful ends.

The peace of God is something else. The peace of God transcends all the horrors of this life. The peace of God is not threatened by the roaring of patriarchy. The peace of God encourages and empowers us to move forward, to continue in whatever way we can, to work for the reign of God, the peaceable kingdom.

Jesus said,\* "I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves." This is not encouraging. Lambs don't typically last long in a pack of wolves. Remember that Jesus was called the lamb, the lamb of God.

Jesus is telling them to imitate him – to be innocent and open to what comes. Perhaps even joyful – think of lambs playing in the spring – they are filled with energy and excitement, ready for anything. Yes the peace of God is no peace but deep struggle – strife closed in the sod – and yet it is a marvelous thing.

And it is ours.

I don't know if you caught it in the reading from Galatians, but Paul reminds us that we are a new creation. He wrote, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!" This is part of his ongoing conversation about racism in the early church. He could have written, \*"For neither black nor white is anything; for neither Asian nor Latino is anything but a new creation is everything!"

We are part of the new creation and we know that at some point the old will pass away. The corporations and institutions of this world will disappear – yes even the Supreme Court, and even the Church in its present form. In fact, it is already passing away and the new is being born in the midst of us. That is our truth, people of God. The new creation is here and now and the new creation is one of peace and justice. The reign of peace, the kin-dom of love.

Just a quick sidebar – what did you think of the first reading from Isaiah where we have a brief glimpse of the great Mother? \* Isaiah dreams of a time when there will be peace in war-torn Jerusalem and peace will be so complete that it will be like sitting on the lap of the great Mother herself. What a lovely and unusual image of God's peace, God's shalom. Isn't that the peace we long for, not the strife in the sod kind? Maybe we can have both – sitting on the great Mother's knee in meditation and then using that strength in our activism as we confront the pain of this as yet unhealed world.

Now let's go back to declaring "Peace to this house!" \* "Peace to Starbucks!", "Peace to Ascendo", "Peace to Nautical Bean!"

Why not? Why don't we experiment? Why don't we see what happens if everywhere we go we offer a blessing of God's peace? "Peace to Ralphs!" "Peace to the Grocery Outlet or the Dollar Store". In this digital age, "Peace to Facebook!" "Peace to CNN!" "Peace to Fox News!"

Jesus has given us the authority to declare God's peace. \*What my friends does this world need more than God's grace and God's peace? So why would we hold back? Why would we be diffident? We don't need to find our opponents and attack them, we just declare the blessing of God's peace and as Jesus said, "if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you."

\*Imagine how powerful it could be if all of us – those who are here, those who are joining us at home and the others who make up our core community – if all 70 or so of us were to consciously and intentionally declare God's reign by blessing every place, every interaction, with God's peace. How would it be if every time we open our email server, check our texts, look at Facebook or Instagram, we declare a blessing of God's peace? If nothing else, our peace will return to us. And that might be life-changing in and of itself.

The blessing of God's peace is never wasted, and it is ours, people of God, it is ours to give with the authority that comes from being part of the body of Christ, from being the disciples of Jesus.

Let us start this very morning. As in a few minutes, we greet one another with peace, let us do it intentionally and with the authority that Jesus gives us.

