

Prayer of the Week:

O merciful Lord, grant to your faithful people pardon and peace, that we may be cleansed from all our sins and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, Proper Twenty-One)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

*And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages.
Amen.*



Peace

September 27th

Peace Has Many Layers

Many of us tend to think about peace as the absence of conflict. In the scriptures, however, peace has many layers of meaning that, when taken together, speak of wholeness.

Peace Is The Righting Of Wrongs

The Gospels of Mark and Luke both tell the story of a woman who was sick and had an internal hemorrhage for twelve years. The woman touched Jesus' robe and was healed. Jesus stopped, acknowledged her faith and pronounced peace over her life. (Mark 5:34/Luke 8:48)

The core concept of peace is making whole that which is complex and has many parts. This is certainly true of the human body which has many complex parts that are all connected to one another. Jesus brought peace to this woman by making her body whole again. Not only that, her illness caused her to cast out of the the city, so she was without community or fellowship.

This lack of peace in the woman's life was no fault of her own. She didn't "deserve" this. It's just how things were, and Jesus steps into that brokenness and offers wholeness.

In this way, peace is the righting of wrongs.

Peace Is Union With God Through Forgiveness Of Sin

Luke 7:36-50

Peace is finding union with God through the forgiveness of sin. In the same way that our bodies can be fractured and broken because of disease or injury, so our souls are fractured because of sin.

The Pharisees were happy to point out the sin of the woman and condemn her based on that sin. Aren't we like Pharisees! The Church would do well to take a break from pointing out the sin of others and admit our own sin and repent.

Our world operates according to revenge and consequences. This is not how God operates. God offers us forgiveness.

Forgiveness is when you no longer allow the offense to define the relationship. God does not relate to us on the basis of sin; God relates to us on the basis of forgiveness.

Peace is healing our sin-fractured hearts through the gift of forgiveness.

Peace Is A Key Marker Of The Kingdom of God

Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Our vision of the kingdom of God is sometimes too narrow. We mistakenly envision the kingdom of God is found when we baptize national values as Christian values. We assume that the kingdom of God uses the same methods and tactics as a nation that has been called Christian. We

envision that the kingdom of God is lived out by following the laws of our particular country or the rules of our particular group. These notions of the kingdom of God are too small.

The kingdom of God is found in righteousness (the word righteousness is deeply connected to the word justice - it means being set right.), peace (making whole or complete that which was broken), and joy (having gratitude for the gift of life and all that I have received) - and these things have no national boundaries. These things have no organizational boundary.

Paul was speaking to the Church in Rome as they tried to work out what it meant to be Christian inside of an empire. He essentially says, "Be sensitive to your beloved in the faith so that you don't cause them to stumble, but don't get too caught up in the rules for the kingdom of God is not found in a list of what you can and can't do, it's found in righteousness (justice), peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Peace is the Work of the Children of God

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

When we embody the ways of peace, we bear the family resemblance of God.

Discernment: Since we are in a political season, let's just think about this politically. Do the politicians and policies I support demonstrate peace (in the fullness of the word)?

Introspection: How much is my life bearing the family resemblance of God?