

Peace Sunday 7th August 2022

Based on CWS Peace Sunday Resource 2022

Call to Worship

Come in thanks Come in peace Come rejoicing in the love that is God.

We come together to share this moment in time In Jesus' Name we come.

Amen

Opening Hymn: Christ is our Peace AA #16

Liturgy of Commitment – Peace

We believe in God,
creator of the world and of all people;
and in Jesus Christ,
incarnate among us, who died and rose again;
and in the Holy Spirit,
present with us to guide, strengthen, and comfort.

We believe.

Lord, help our unbelief.

We rejoice in every sign of God's kingdom:
in the upholding of human dignity and community;
in every expression of love, justice, and reconciliation;
in each act of self-giving on behalf of others;
in the abundance of God's gifts
entrusted to us that all may have enough;
in all responsible use of the earth's resources.

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.**

We confess our sin, individual and collective,
by silence or action:
through the violation of human dignity
based on race, class, age, sex, nation, or faith;
through the exploitation of people
by greed and indifference;
through the misuse of power
in personal, communal, national, and international life;
through the search for security
by military and economic forces
that threaten human existence:
through the abuse of technology

which endangers the earth and all life upon it.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We commit ourselves individually and as a community
to the way of Christ;
to take up the cross;
to seek abundant life for all humanity;
to struggle for peace with justice and freedom;
to risk ourselves in faith, hope, and love,
praying that God's kingdom may come.

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

Hymn of Forgiveness: Because you came HIOS #10

Scripture:

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

Psalms 33:12-22

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Luke 12: 32-40

Music Following Scripture: Peace Be with You

Reflection:

Peace is far more than the absence of war.

I wonder if you read the faith and reason piece this week in the Otago Daily Times? As an introduction the author shared about the history of the much-loved hymn "When peace like a river attendeth my way." It was written by the hymn writer Horatio Spafford. He is saying, "I can cope with whatever life throws at me because I've put my hope in God, who's taught me this faithful response 'whatever my lot'."

Disaster certainly "attended the way" of Spafford. First, in 1871 the Great Fire of Chicago destroyed most of the real estate he'd invested in. Then came a disaster much more grievous. In 1873 the family set out for Europe. Spafford's wife went ahead with their four daughters. Their ship was struck by a sailing vessel while crossing the Atlantic and 226 people were killed, including all four of Spafford's daughters. His wife sent him a telegram from Wales bearing two words only, "Saved alone". Spafford immediately set out to join her, and as his ship passed over where his girls had died, he was moved to pick up his pen and write this hymn. His

response to the tragedy was an extraordinary posture of hope: I'm putting my trust, whatever happens, in the God who loves me and holds me in his hand. Despite this catastrophe, I'm his, and he'll lead me through.

This past week I have heard from a number of you as peace has entered your thoughts. Perhaps the biggest of these has been the now 6 months of war in Ukraine. Of note was the agreement between Ukraine and Russia to allow the export of grain and corn to largely Africa from the port of Odessa, and within 24 hours Russia attacked the port once again, fortunately a number of ships have now been able to export the life sustaining food. The other story I heard was one of being at peace in your own heart with your own circumstances. Sometimes that seeking of peace can take a long time to attain. Sometimes it can take a lifetime to attain the much sought after peace.

Today is Peace Sunday August 7, we remember the terrible destruction at Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and think about how we can work with others to promote peace. Sadako was a young Japanese girl on the day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima at the end of World War II. She was taken to the hospital for treatment. The nurses at the hospital encouraged her and the other children to take their medicines by folding origami figures out of the medicine wrappers. Sadako's favourite was the crane. An old Japanese legend stated that anyone who folded 1,000 cranes would have her wish fulfilled. Sadako began folding cranes. With every crane that she folded, she whispered, 'I will write peace on your wings, and you will fly all over the world.' She had folded 664 cranes when she died. On Hiroshima Day, you can see thousands of paper cranes suspended from the tower in its Peace Park, continuing her prayer.

Our focus is so often when it come to talk of peace only really focuses on the broadness of world peace. Which is so often expressed as being the absence of war. And yet biblically speaking and for our own sake peace means so much more. Peace in the Old Testament sense, which is Shalom: wholeness, completeness, wellbeing and living in harmony with creation, which includes humans.

Peace means much more than the cessation of hostility. Peace, really isn't the opposite of war. War is destruction, and the opposite to that is construction /creation and art. Compared to war, the way of peace seems so obvious and simple: we know that war is destruction, killing and horror; we affirm the golden rule, and we teach our children to resolve their differences and to not hit back, so then why do nations use war to solve their conflicts? And doesn't it make more sense to turn an enemy into a friend, then try to defeat or destroy him

Sadly, conquest and war has often been connected with the church. Nationalism has transcended many countries Christian roots. And we see time and time again faith used as an addition to the arsenal to bring destruction to others.

And yet our God is a God of peace.

We must remind ourselves that our God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of peace. It is integral to the divine nature of God. We celebrate at Christmas the birth of the prince of peace.

Jesus has promised to us in John 14; that the peace He gives, cannot be given by anything nor person in this world. He reminds us that His Peace does not keep us from trouble and fear, but it protects us from allowing these forces to overwhelm us. The Peace He gives does not mean peace in the absence of trouble, but peace in the midst of trouble. Peace not from the absence of fear, but peace in the midst of fear.

The peace, which the world offers, is the peace of escape, the peace that comes from avoiding trouble, peace based upon what one possesses, financially and materially, a peace which comes from refusing to face our realities. The peace that Jesus offers us is the peace, which is independent of outward circumstances. It is the peace which no experience in life can ever take from us. The peace He gives, no sorrow, nor danger, nor suffering can make less of. His is our Peace. He is the Prince of Peace.

Yes, the Peace Jesus gives is not as the world gives. His Peace cannot be bought on Wall Street. His Peace cannot be negotiated at the United Nations. His Peace cannot be guaranteed by a thriving economy, or by the promises of any world leader. Because the Peace He gives, is Himself. It is Soul Peace. The Peace of His Fellowship. The Peace of His Friendship. The Peace of His Forgiveness. The Peace of His Salvation. The Peace of His Grace and Mercy. The Peace of His Protection. The Peace that God will supply our every need according to His riches in Christ Jesus. The Peace that He has gone to prepare a place for us that where He is, we will someday be also. The Peace that when this battle is over, we shall wear a crown in the New Jerusalem. Soul Peace.

Music of Reflection: HIOS #111 Peace be with you
“Peace be with you”, says the risen Christ,
peace be with us as we hold the word,
peace determine us, peace affirm in us
ways to honour what our hearts have heard.

Peace be with us in the day-to-day,
peace connecting all our dreams and drives,
peace the patient thing, peace that draws the string,
potent healing of our broken lives.

Peace be with us in the hour of death,
peace in darkness on the way to trust,

peace in letting go all we have or know,
peace, the presence of the living Christ.

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Communion:

Invitation

This table is for all of us, near and far, high and low, east and west and north and south. This table is for all of us, but it is not our table. It's not a Presbyterian table. It's not a New Zealand table. It's God's table, for all of us, and it's a table of grace. So come and take your place at the table. You are welcome, you are invited, you are called: come, let us share this meal together.

Communion Hymn: Here I stand among God's people HIOS # 55

Here I stand among God's people
giving thanks for all God's care,
and I gladly bring my offering
to the common life we share.
There's a thread within God's story
that is mine alone to know,
and a vision of God's glory
that my life was made to show.

When the Gospel words are spoken,
when the bread and wine are blessed,
Jesus makes me more than welcome
at the table as his guest.
And as I go out to serve him
in my action, work and prayer,
he will send me where I'm needed;
when he calls me I'll be there.

With the Word of God to guide me
I will learn my whole life long;
with the Spirit here beside me
I'll be confident and strong
as I work for peace and justice
in my own appointed place,
and I'll stand among God's people
till I see God face to face.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, O Lord our God, creator and ruler of the universe. Even when we were dust, when our story begins in dust, you were there, your word was there, your breath into the lifeless void. And upon your word all creation sprang into life. When we were in the wilderness, terrified, timid, you were there, your word was there, with manna just enough for today, with water even from the driest rock, with the abundant grace upon which our story always rests. And when we fell short, slaves to power and greed, you were there, your word was there, on the lips of prophets, and in the hearts of servants, in stories of revolution and revelation and liberation, calling us even now to acts of courage and witness and peace. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with choirs of angels, with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and with all the faithful of every time and place, who forever sing to the glory of your name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Indeed, blessed are you, O Christ, our Lord, for risking yourself among us, vulnerable and rejected; for teaching among us, teaching the radical hope of God; teaching grace to a world bent on vengeance, teaching love to a world bent on destruction, teaching peace to a world bent on tearing itself apart. You were there, your word was there, even to the point of death itself. Even faced with terror and hatred and the brokenness of the world, you rose again, to new life, to new creation, to resurrection, that we might know something other than the dust, that we might expect something other than the end, that we might work for something other than ourselves. And so you speak to us again, with these abundant gifts of bread and wine, with which we joyfully celebrate your dying and rising, as we await the table of the Kingdom yet to come, and as we dedicate ourselves again to you, thankful, and transformed, as living and holy sacrifices, that our lives may proclaim the one crucified and risen. Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, and upon these your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break together, and the cup we share together, may retell our common stories together and reshape our common bonds together, and remember our common grace together, ^{[[L]]}_{SEP} in the communion of the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ, the one in whose life and death you have torn down our divisions. And so may we be one with all who share this feast, on this day, of all days, with all your children at every corner of your table. May we share this

abundant cup with all those who thirst for your justice. May we share this abundant bread with all those who hunger for your righteousness, May we be united with every corner of your story, united in hope, united in vision, united in purpose, united in ministry in every place. As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us from this table to be the body of Christ in all the world. Send us with a spirit of courage, a spirit of power and love, that we may be witnesses in all creation to the unending story of your word breathing life into the dust. Keep us faithful, and fruitful, and hopeful, and peaceful, until we come at last to the one table of your Kingdom, to feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm, with you and with your Word, through Christ and in Christ, the one who came for us, died for us, and rose for us, the one who prays even for us, the one who first taught us to pray, saying: Our Father...

Breaking the Bread

Prayer after Communion

Gracious God, we offer our thanks, for the whole communion of saint's witness to this feast, and for the ministry of churches around the world who gather with us today. By this broken bread may we each be restored for the work yet to come. By this shared cup may we each be claimed for the proclamation of your Kingdom. At this shared table may we be united as children of your promise, children of your word, dying and made new again, sent boldly together into the world as servants of your peace. Amen.

Prayer for Peace:

God, who brings Peace On this day we remember the children, women and men who were killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, those who were injured and lost everything they had. We remember people harmed by nuclear testing in the Pacific and elsewhere the workers and their families who carry the cancers in their bodies.

We are watchful and alert, we dare to pray for peace.

On this day we pray for the people who live in the midst of violence and war, for those who carry mental and physical injuries, for those whose lives are in danger, without food or protection, and for people uprooted from their homes.

We are watchful and alert, we dare to pray for peace.

On this day we pray for the people who cause destruction and sometimes death, for the political and military leaders who no longer know how to keep the peace, for the manufacturers of weapons and the employers of armies and militia, for those who live in ways that undermine and destroy the lives of others.

We are watchful and alert, we dare to pray for peace.

When our world echoes with the sound of war, violence and pain, we affirm our faith in the resurrection. We pray for ourselves and our community - that we will find ways to be peacemakers and lifegivers, bringing life in the face of death.

We are watchful and alert, we dare to pray for peace. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

Closing Hymn: I am the light of the World WOV #669

Commission and Benediction

Peace is like a river. It rises and falls - sometimes it floods. Be watchful. Be alert.

Find ways to make peace in the places where it hurts.

May you sense the love of God with you and in the world

May you experience the grace of Jesus Christ in your life and your life with others

May you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit making all things new.

Go in peace. Amen.

Andrew Howley

07.08.2022