

Being the Church at Brentwood Presbyterian

Remembering

November 6, 2011

**Psalm 104:24-30 and Isaiah 2:1-5
(Hymns – 301, 740, 534, 556)**

I've always been intrigued
about what Jesus was doing
for the 30 years between his birth and the beginning of his public ministry.

All the evidence from the public ministry
would suggest that he was studying theology –
the sense that God makes in and for the world.
Theos is the Greek word for God.
Logos the the Greek word for meaning or sense,
but it also has the connotation of relationship.
So, *theo–logy* is the study of what a relationship with God means for the world,
what sense it helps us make of our lives with God.

We know from the gospel of Luke
that Jesus showed signs of brilliance in this field at a very early age.

At the age of 12,
he was in the Temple with the leading Jewish teachers,
listening to them and asking and answering questions.
He returned to Nazareth with his parents,
where he “grew in both body and in wisdom,
gaining favour with God and man.” (Luke 2:46-51)

From the kind of teaching he began to do at the age of 30,
it seems pretty clear that the focus of his learning
was the witness of the prophets
to the sense that a relationship with God of Abraham and Sarah
made for the world in which people were living.

Of special important for Jesus was the prophet Isaiah.
He's the prophet quoted most often.
Jesus' first sermon begins by reading the opening verses of Isaiah 61.
It concludes with Jesus claiming
that the passage had come true that day
as he began his public ministry.
Jesus is the Chosen One of God,
sent to make God's desire everlasting peace in a peaceable kingdom
a reality in the world.

Matthew's account of the beginning of Jesus' public ministry
also includes a quote from the prophet Isaiah.
It's from the beginning of the 9th chapter
and talks about the people living in darkness seeing a great light,
about how the light will shine in the land of death.

Then Matthew records the sermon Jesus preaches to the crowds,
the Sermon on the Mount about true happiness or blessedness.

Blessed or happy are those who work for peace,
because God will call them his children.

Again, that theme of the peaceable kingdom,
so powerfully preached in Isaiah,
emerges at the centre of Jesus' theology and witness as well.

A central theme in Jesus remembering, then, is peace.

The first reference to this theme in Isaiah
is the passage we read this morning.

It is a vision of this God who promised Abraham and Sarah
that their descendants would be a blessing to all creation
teaching humans what he wants them to do,
how we can walk in the paths he has chosen,
how we can walk in the light that the Lord has given us.

We will hammer our swords into ploughs
and our spears into pruning-knives.

What a vision!

Imagine what this world would be like
if we took all the resources that we put into war –
the trillions of dollars and the billions of person-hours –
and put them instead into the provision of food and well-being.

Imagine what this world would be like
if we shifted our priorities from destruction to production.

Imagine what this world would be like
if we listened to the Word of God rather than our own fears.

And that's what this question of war and peace boils down to,
as I understand it at this point in my learning.

How deeply do we trust God's promise to be with us
and God's assurance to not fear.

As we've said frequently in this community,
the core affirmation of the Christian faith
is that we need not fear for God is with us.

"Fear not, for I am with you,"
is heard over and over again in the Scriptures'
witness to what God does for us in Jesus Christ.
He is Emmanuel – God with us.

For many who have lived through the horrors of war,
remembering has more to do with the cost than the glory.
The red of the poppy is the red of the blood of their friends on the ground.
The post traumatic stress makes it hard to even talk about it.
War is hell.

Christians are ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven,
a peaceable kingdom in which all work together to bless each other
as they walk in the light of the God revealed as triumphant in Jesus Christ.

For Christians, war and peace is a testing, and often testy, issue.
We had a lively discussion of it on Friday night at Bible study.
There are differing opinions among us,
perspectives that I respect and continue to consider.

What I've offered this morning seems to many like a fantastic folly,
a dangerous idealism in a real world of evil aggression.

And it is.
That I will readily admit.

But the real question for the disciples of Jesus Christ,
as we remember what Jesus taught and did,
is whether that fantastic folly and dangerous idealism
is, in fact, the Gospel.

Is it the Good News from God in Jesus Christ
about the nature of the kingdom of heaven,
a kingdom we pray weekly, if not daily,
will come on earth as it is in heaven?

How blessed would we truly be
if we began to work for peace rather than war,
if we began to advocate
for using the resources we currently devote to destruction
to produce food, and shelter, and health care, and the courage of faith.