

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood – Dec 20, 2015

Advent 4 – Joint Service with Burnaby Taiwanese Pres Church

Living in Love

Ps 80:1-7 & Micah 5:2-5a

**And he shall stand and feed his flock
in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure,
for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth;
and he shall be the one of peace.
(Micah 5:4-5a)**



This is a famous painting by Edward Hicks,
an American Quaker preacher,
called 'The Peaceable Kingdom.'
It was painted in the 1840s.

During his lifetime, Hicks painted over 100 versions of this image.
It picks up on the Biblical themes in Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 65.
Various species and various peoples are getting along in peace.
It is picture of the impact of love in a fearful and divided world.

[translation]

Particularly important, in the background,
is William Penn, the Quaker founder of Pennsylvania,
making peace with the Delaware First Nations.
The story goes that the following commitments were made:

“We meet on the broad pathway of good faith and good-will; no advantage shall be taken on either side, but all shall be openness and love. We are the same as if one man’s body was to be divided into two parts; we are of one flesh and one blood.”

[translation]

If we are to enjoy more fully God’s promised gifts
of strength, security, and peace
that are contained in our text this morning,
then we too, in our time and places,
must travel the broad pathway of good faith and good will
with openness and love.
That is what it means to follow the One of peace
who comes in the name of the Lord
in the person of Jesus Christ.
He restores us to the flourishing well-being
that is the original good that God intends for us.

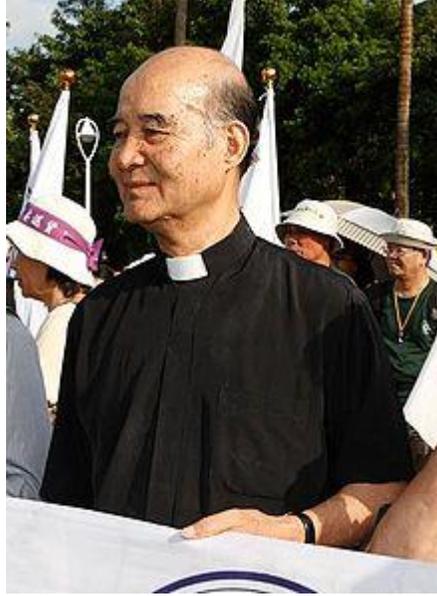
[translation]

Living in this kind of love,
with this kind of God,
is not easy in our world.
We fear the powers that surround us,
whether they be big countries or smalls bands of terrorists.
You simply cannot love as God desires
if you are shut down in fear.

[translate]

We seem satisfied to be divided by language, race, and creed,
finding security by surrounding ourselves with people who are the same.
You simply cannot love as God desires
if you huddle together with those who are the same.

[translate]



While I was in my first parish back in Toronto from 1978 – 1985,
The Rev C.M. Kao, Secretary General of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,
was imprisoned for resisting the government in Taiwan.
I remember following the reports on his work and witness in prison
from his wife between 1980–1984.
In the face of fear and division, he stood for self-determination and democracy.
His courage to do that came from the love of God
that he had experienced in the person of Jesus Christ.

[translate]

In the face of imperial ambition and power
that always uses fear and division to impose its will,
many leaders in the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan –
CM Kao, Shoki Coe, CS Song –
worked tirelessly to witness to and encourage
a Christian faith that built peace
through developing openness and love
among all peoples of the earth.

[translate]

When God took flesh and dwelt among us at Christmas,
full of the grace and truth,
this world became, more than ever, the theatre of divine love.
This world is the stage upon which the drama of divine love
unfolds in acts of courage like those of CM Kao.

[translate]

One of my favourite Presbyterian preachers is Frederick Buechner.
He thinks that Christmas is the time when
“all heaven breaks loose” on earth.
When it does, people start to live in the love of God like CM Kao loved.
They start to find the courage to face resistance to God’s love,
like CM Kao did.
They start to find the wisdom to work for peace with others,
like CM Kao did.
They walk the paths of good faith and good-will,
Like CM Kao did.

[translate]

May we find during this Christmas season
that the Holy Spirit is provoking us to live in God’s love,
encouraging and enlightening us
to walk with Jesus into a future of God’s strength, security and peace.

[translate]