

Peace Begins with Me
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United Church of Broomfield
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Isaiah 11:1-10 (New KJV)

1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
2 The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.
3 His delight *is* in the fear of the Lord,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;
4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.
5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.
6 “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.
7 The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den.
9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea.
10 “And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.”

Do you remember the movie, *My Cousin Vinny*? The story is about two New York college students who are accused of murder while driving through rural Alabama. Vinny Laguardia Gambini, played by Joe Pesci, is the uncle of one of the “yutes.” Vinny is a New York lawyer with no trial experience. He goes to Alabama to defend his nephew and takes his girlfriend, Mona Lisa Vito, with him. Vinny and Mona Lisa are stereotypical New Yorkers with the extreme outfits, mannerisms and accents. While there, Vinny and Mona Lisa, are staying at a local motel. At night, as they try to sleep, there is nary a sound except for maybe an owl hooting. The quaint, quiet and peaceful ambiance drives Vinny crazy. In court one day, Vinny’s mouth gets him into trouble and he’s charged with contempt by the judge, forcing him to spend the night in jail. There, it’s loud, chaotic and

unruly with prisoners and guards screaming and alarms blaring...all the while, Vinny is peacefully sleeping like a little baby.

War is defined as an active conflict that has claimed more than 1000 lives.

In the last approximately 3400 years of recorded history, there have only been 268 [scattered] years where the world has been at peace, only 8% of recorded history.

War is often regarded by observers as honorable and noble.¹

What is peace? When we seek a definition for peace, the dictionary defines it as

- Freedom from disturbance; tranquility
- A state or period in which there is no war or war has ended

Is this sufficient for you? When you think of what peace is or what is not, are these two definitions accurate or maybe too simple - would you elaborate more? If asked to provide examples of PEACE and PEACEFUL moments, what might you offer?

I ask these questions because while we seem to be able to DEFINE peace, we don't seem to agree on what peace is. For Vinny Gambini, "peace," wasn't quiet, tranquility. And, for humanity, peace hasn't been resisting conflict and killing.

As we discuss the nuances of peace, as believers in God and Jesus Christ, we should consider what our faith tells us:

Psalm 4:8 In peace I will lie down and sleep

Psalm 29:11 ...the Lord blesses his people with peace

John 16:33 ...in me you may have peace

John 14:27 ..my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Our scripture reading today from Isaiah foretells of a peacemaker with the Spirit of the Lord. A spirit of wisdom and of understanding. One who will judge with justice and righteousness. Under this peacemaker, the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard with the goat, the lion with the calf. Infants will be able to play with vipers. It is a perfect vision of peace.

We believe that peacemaker for which Isaiah speaks is Jesus Christ. In Matt 5:9, Jesus says Blessed are the peacemakers...

Five chapters later, Jesus says in Matthew 10:34, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn " 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— 36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

Wait, what?

What happened to tranquility and no more war?! Is peace attainable or not?

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/books/chapters/what-every-person-should-know-about-war.html>

The root of Jesse will be raised high, posted as a rallying sign for the peoples. The nations will all come to him. His headquarters will be glorious.

Peace happens when we first LOOK TO GOD/the example of Jesus.

We believe that peace – in all its unlikely, improbable and unexpected forms, iterations and realizations – is possible.

We desire peace – we pray for it.

Peace happens when we then follow God's instructions – follow Jesus' actions.

We do the active work of justice.

We MAKE peace

We GIVE peace

We RECEIVE peace

...for you see, peace is a "state" that we seek and one in which we live, actively engaged and not as passive bystanders.

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."

The work of attaining peace is hard. It's hard because we want peace on OUR terms, rather than on Christ's. This is what Jesus means when he speaks about bringing a sword ---- and houses being against houses, sons against fathers, and daughters against mothers.

In the novel *Montana 1948*, Marie is an indigenous woman, working as a maid for the powerful Hayden Family, specifically Wesley Hayden, the town sheriff. Marie becomes ill, but won't see the town doctor, Wesley's brother, Frank. Wesley's wife shockingly discovers that Marie won't see Frank because for years, he has been molesting and raping indigenous girls and women. Frank subsequently murders Marie and Wesley is faced with a dilemma. The only people who know of Frank's crimes are those in the Hayden family and they seem to be ok with covering things up – keeping peace in the family. It'd be easy to sweep them under the rug – these are just worthless, indigenous girls for whom nobody cares, after all. But if Wesley actually enforces righteous justice – and holds Frank accountable, it would mean anything but peace. It would be the downfall and destruction of the entire Hayden family and probably the town as well.²

The peace of which God speaks and for which Christ lives and dies is attained through righteous justice. Justice is a weapon, the sword of Jesus that can and will divide the closest and strongest of relationships and families.

If we want the peace of God to triumph over all then we must realize that peace is personal and intentional. We cannot rely or expect on governments to initiate peace. We cannot passively stand by and expect our thoughts and prayers alone to bring about peace.

"...intentional, [active] peacemakers will stop such insanity. In doing so, we will count the cost of the sword which separates God's means of peacemaking from [a selfish, militaristic] method. If we are to be peacemakers, the Bible tells us that we must center on Christ. [Matthew 10:37 tells us, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." We must center not on family, not on our own well-being, but on Christ. There can be peace in us and

² Li, Danyang. *Justice for the Mother*. <https://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/journal/past-issues/issue-5/li/>

in our world, a peace which is uniquely different from the world's methodology, and political knee jerk philosophy.”³

[We must change our thinking. Consider this: from today's scripture with the lamb and the wolf, if you're the lamb who has been hunted by wolves your entire life, your daily existence is constantly threatened by the mere existence of wolves, you - whose family/your kind has been hunted and killed by wolves for generations - would you envision peace in your life as dwelling WITH wolves? Would you risk that peace – tranquility, no violence or murder – exists in relationship with wolves? Unlikely. You'd probably think peace in your life would mean that there would be no wolves at all. No wolves would be a peaceful existence. But that's not God's vision of peace. In God's vision and in Christ's teachings, predator and prey find peace in the presence of one another, **not in exclusion or absence.**” No separated, but together.

At the table of Christ, may we receive, give and dwell in God's peace as

- Lamb with wolf, leopard with goat, cow with bear
- Hatfields with McCoys
- Gay with straight – and L, B, T, Q, I and A
- White supremacists with members of BLM
- Theists with Atheists with Agnostics

It is possible to attain peace. The possibility begins to transition from believing in peace on earth to finding its reality in [our] desire for justice. But the desire is not enough. Desire must be translated into active peacemaking – relationship with one another. Relationships not based in tolerance, but lifted up in advocacy, celebration and glorification.

Let there be peace on earth – and let it begin with me.

AMEN

³ Bond, Alan. *Peacemaking – Active, Not Passive.*