

LANGUAGE OF PEACE

I finally found the answer to having peace.....

I'll stay at home and stop reading, listening to the news and watching hockey night in Canada with Don Cherry.

Maybe "not knowing" is a way to acquire peace?

The daily headlines appear to expose how peace is losing ground.

Each day seems to bring more and more bad news.....

.....not as bad as the daily updates Herman Cain received.

[He was trying to be the Republican candidate for president]

.....but still discouraging.....

The other day, I was about to turn off the radio when I heard report on Stephen Pinker's new book, "Better angels of our nature: the decline of violence in history and it's causes."

Pinker asserts that human nature is evolving to be less violence. I'm not sure he's correct about the mechanics; however, it is very true that we are doing less violence AND we now have a greater distain for violence.

In my lifetime, the toleration for violence has dropped noticeably, and the desire for peaceful solutions has greatly increased, too.

We are making progress!

The military is very concerned about the public response to what they call "collateral damage". Our society no longer accepts excessive carnage.

Also, the attitude towards bully was very different when I young.

When I was in school, bullying was never mentioned, and the prevailing view was to fight back.

Today, across Canada, bullying is a major concern, and fighting back is NOT tolerated.

Teaching this / proclaiming a peaceful approach to bullying is ABSOLUTELY Wonderful!!!

.....Because,..... it won't take long before people connect the dots and realize that building a strong military and using it against weaker nations is a form of bullying.

This is Good..... People are seeing the beauty of doing peace.

In fact,.....most everyone is for peace.

Soldiers are for peace,..... and to a degree, manufacturers of weapons are for peace, too: peace wherever their factors are located.

People want peace!

Granted, definitions vary, but all sane people want peace.

For most, their vision of peace includes comfort, well-being, safety, calm and a sense of assurance that all will be okay.

The vision may be personal, local, culturally limited or broader,... still,..to be sure, People want peace,.....AND.....they will work hard, even fight to acquire peace.

Mennonites are identified as a peace church.

I imagine, those of other persuasions, must think our declaration as strange,..... becausewho's against peace?

The significant difference is how peace is defined: the language of peace.

As you know, there are a few of our fellow churches that are uncomfortable with our wording. Those few churches tend to be more revivalistic with a heavy emphasis on blood atonement. Those churches want salvation / soul winning to be the dominant words used. And,..... so far, we have been at a loss for words at how to respond.

We have failed to find the right words to express our message of peace.

I won't attempt to generalize our views. Instead, I'll speak in the first person.

I comprehend the way and teachings of Jesus as God's will—God's plan and hope for humanity. Following Christ's example of love, grace and justice, *non-violently is our path to salvation*..... andbrings about peace!
Peace is wholeness/at oneness/atonement with God & all that is God's.

I desire that everyone discovers this path / this way of being.
I become uncomfortable when human behaviour is counter to the way of Christ..... because I believe peace is that important, and I fear for the world when we pursue other ways. My/ our salvation is peace.

Using different words: "I believe salvation is that important, and I fear for those who are lost.

Do you see? Both statements have the same basic concern, passion and motivation. One is in the words of the more revivalistic churches.

Continuing: I fear for those caught in the darkness of violence and destruction when peace does not prevail.

Or.....

I fear for those who are lost and doomed because there will be violence and destruction.
Both positions possess fear,..... and FEAR is not a trait of peace.
Everyone wants peace and to be free of fear.

The challenge for us is finding the proper way to communicate.

Granted, there are differences in theology between us and revivalistic churches.
Nevertheless, we most everyone in the world.... wants peace and are striving to do what is thought to be best..... to achieve peace / to live without fear.

There is an old joke that goes like this:

Who is a polyglot?

Answer:.... someone who speaks many languages.

Who is bilingual?

Answer: a Canadian,..... or we could say most Mennonites.

And, what is the word for someone who only knows one language?

Answer: an American.

It's an old joke because before long, the majority of Americans will speak English and Spanish.

However, the point is: one way of speaking / one selection of words is not enough.

I believe that calling ourselves a peace church is not sufficient.

I think we should say that we are striving to be peacemakers,... and to be a peacemaker.....we HAVE to be polyglots / WE HAVE to know many ways to communicate with others different from us.

The burden is on peacemakers.

And, what is it that we need to say?

What do people need to hear?

What is the message that opens doors and that leads to redemption and peace?

Is it our theology?

Is it our stance on non-violence..... or simple living?

What is desperately needed to be received?

In the Isaiah text, God uses many ways to get the message across.

For example, symbolic imagery is used to convey the message, such as valleys will be lifted up; uneven ground will be made level, and so forth.

The message is for those living in exile, longing to go home, hoping for safety and comfort, and aspiring for peace.

Yet, a voice cries out, "WHAT SHALL I SAY?"

And, God answers, "Tell the people, ...Do Not Fear...."

Do Not Fear. It will be okay. God will carry them home.

Do Not fear.

Before anything is said about a saviour / salvation or world peace, to the frightened, lowly shepherds, God's messengers... the angels,... First Tells them..... "Fear not" / Don't be afraid.

Do Not Fear..... is the message that needs to be heard.

At the core of what pains the world is fear.
People are afraid. What drives people is fear.

And so,..... as peacemakers.....we must be creative / we must find ways to say, "Do Not be afraid."

Those demanding the rhetoric of soul winning, we must find words to say, "Don't be afraid. We are doing salvation, too; we are striving to serve God. We are with you. You need not worry. We appreciate your concern for those separate from the love of God.
Don't be afraid. We are on the same side."

To the hungry, the message may be presented as food and ways to enable them.

To the poor and powerless, "Do Not be afraid" may take the form of: I am standing with you. The ground will be made level. You will not be overwhelmed.

To those who lost their homes to a hurricane, Do not fear will sound like hammers hitting nails and saws cutting wood, with a Canadian accent.

To the lonely, do not fear is ... you are not forgotten; I am with you.

To the elderly, the fear is limited control, influence and... time. Do not fear is "You are appreciated. You will not be ignored. We need you."

To victim the message may come from silently listening or by getting in the way to end the abuse.

To the abuser, the words could be: you are loved; you need not hurt to stop the hurt; there's a better way.

The selfishly rich are driven by fear, too: a fear of depravity and of not being in control.
Perhaps, words of assurance and words of encouragement may take away the fear, such as,..... "Trust me, you'll be fine if you give away a million or two,..... or a hundred or twenty dollars."
(Affluence is actually contextual and a perception)

To the soldier who's learning to destroy to make the world a better place, how can we share the peace of Christ?

How do we say, "Do not fear."

What words do we use for the younger generations? or ... for our neighbour?

How do we say, "Do Not fear" to aboriginals?

What do we say to those who are afraid of change?

Sometimes, body language or actions work best? []

And, to those who just don't get it, Jesus directly confronted them, BUT...none of us are Jesus. So,... we must present Christ: live and proclaim Christ,..... and who knows,..... society may start teaching peaceful ways to deal with bullies. ?????

Peace begins with "do not be afraid."

Salvation begins with "Do not be afraid."

To terrified souls out in the darkness, the message of God's salvation for humanity / the message that God was actively bringing peace came to them with the opening words:
FEAR NOT Don't be afraid.

With the message of comfort, compassion... in the words Do not fear, The shepherds were then able to listen to the instruction on how to find Jesus / how to discover the prince of peace.

The opening lines of Christmas / the call to the manger begins with
Do not be afraid.

Nevertheless, we face two problems:

One is how to say to others and each other, "Do not fear."

And, the other problem is:

Can we honestly say, "Do not fear", when we are afraid / when we are controlled by fear?

The Christmas narrative is an invitation to journey down the path to embrace a baby.
A Baby? Peace begins as a baby? Imagine that.