

PEACE IN PLACE

[A paraphrase of the passage is at the end]

Today's focus statement is: acting out of pride and a sense of entitlement can often lead to violence; humility promotes peace.

Humility: one of those concepts / attributes that we affirm, yet trip over and end up falling into a pile of guilt.

However, one person I know, posted the following on Facebook, not long ago:

"I'm very humble. I'm probably the most humble person I know."

I like that statement, yet most of us don't feel that way... in part because we find humility distasteful because we really don't understand humility.

We tend to associate humility with being a door mat / being wimpy ..... or we connect it with humiliation.

Humiliation is Not a fun experience.

Have you ever been humiliated?

Have you ever gone to a conference at a four star hotel, but decided the 4 stars weren't big enough, so went to a better hotel and then hired a limo to take you back to attend the conference at the mediocre 4 star hotel, and.... then get accused of having an excessive sense of entitlement?

Poor Bev Oda got a "dis" prefix for her "honourable" title.

Or have you been caught using a government helicopter for personal reasons, as happened to another honourable MP?

To a lesser degree, I imagine most of us had to eat humble pie at one time or another.

Humble pie.... eating your words or any type of humiliation is no fun... because it is a Put down.

Humiliation is a put down.

Humiliation is being put in one's place.

We have a place that fits us, and living in that place is being humble.

It is that simple.

**Humility is living contentedly in one's place.**

It is NOT being smaller than we are. There is no need to pretend to be mouse.

**Humility is living contentedly in our place.**

In contrast, a sense of entitlement means that we are not content with the conditions our situation / our place, and we expect and seek more.

To be sure, all of us, as humans / as God's creation, we are entitled to many things, such as to be treated with respect, to not be abused, to be paid fairly for our labour, and so forth.

And, it is true: some people are granted more entitlements. The queen's place/ her realm is different than ours. We give that to her, just as our society allows extra privileges to those who pay for them.

It's fair system if we agree to it, and..... as long as others are not being unduly hurt or deprived by that arrangement.

As a poor university student, I was not entitled to all the comforts and conveniences that I now enjoy.

However, just because I can afford to buy blueberries in January that are imported from South American,... doesn't mean I'm entitled to that luxury.....

In order to be humble we must constantly monitor and check our reach / our entitlement to make sure we are not hurting others or... exceeding our "place."

I don't believe we are entitled to abuse people or the environment for any reason.

Reaching beyond our place / feeling entitled to More is based on Greed and... the fear of depravity. Greed and such insecure fear does not come from God. Both are an antithesis to living in God's will.

Humility is living contentedly in our place in the world,.... and our place is fluid: things change / relationship change, and so on.

Related to an exaggerated sense of entitlement is pride. Again, we often trip over "pride" because it has two different meanings.

Pride can simple be a satisfied sense of attachment to a personal or group choice or action. It's okay for Mennonites to be proud of singing well in four part harmony.

Another form of pride is an inflated sense of one's personal status, sometimes called hubris or extreme arrogance.

The ugly pride is self inflation... demanding to be regarded and treated beyond one's real place and merit.

That sort of pride reveals a deep lack of self confidence and personal safety. Prideful people are insecure and inwardly fearful.

Don't confuse confident and self-assured with pride.

For example: Fights have broken out because one person insulted another's mother..... or made an belittling statement. A confident person would not need to resort to violence in order to defend one's honour or "pride."

I once had a 4 year old child call me a "poopy head", and it didn't even bother me. I didn't even lash back.

Because,..... I had enough confidence, self esteem to endure such caustic abuse,..... because..... I didn't feel threatened by a 4 year old.

I felt strong enough and safe.

Pride and exaggerated entitlement comes into play when fears and threats exceed our sense of contentment and safety.

When the US reacted violently to the 9/11 attacks, they revealed to the world that they were weak and that they were afraid.

The violent outrage over those terrible assaults was not based on a justified reaction to the 3,000 people killed.

In the past ten years, in the US, the average number of Americans killed by guns is over 10,000 each year,... and it sadly may be even more this year.

Where's the outrage? And, what is the reaction? ..... more violence.

Gun sales surged after the recent slaughter in Colorado.

And, gun violence is rising in our country, too.

Likewise, the attacks of 9/11 made people afraid.....

Their pride was assaulted and their believed entitlement of being able to do anything in the world without repercussion were challenged.

From fear and insecurity rises pride and the inflated sense of entitlement.

Both are invitations for battle.

Entitlement is reaching out to take / assault because one's own place is not secure and safe.

Pride is a defensive fortress protecting fear and doubts.

Crazy, sad and destructive things happen when entitlement and pride prevails.

Yet, our culture seems to condone, even encourage such behaviour and responses.

It's not good enough for our athletes to do their best. We expect metals, gold metals.

It's not good enough to rely on each other and live in harmony with the land. We are told to expect more ... to develop more,... to get more,... no matter the consequences.....

Plus, our military must be strong enough to respond to insults and those who dare limit our reach.

Where is the peace in all of that?

Who is teaching mercy and humility?

Who is encouraging being content in one's place?

Who is promoting living with assurance, safety and grace ....because of God?

???

The Bible is..... and so are many churches.

One important reason to come to church is to hear / to receive the better way.

Today's text is a wonderful short story, full of wisdom, intrigue and humour.

Moreover, it is a political statement, too.

It was written about David, berating David's pride and sense of entitlement,.....it was written long after he was King.

It was a strong statement condemning their political leader, and saying that even leaders must know their place and be humble.

The story, also includes the necessity of intervention.

Abigail, broke the rules—defied her partner and the ruler of the clan, and humbly sought mercy and peace for the good of all.

The episode confirms that David was unjustly treated, even insulted, and that Nabal was not a nice man; even so, David's violent reaction was way over the top.

In contrast, those who trust in God are self confident, content without fear and are merciful.

In other words, they are humble as Abigail was.

David is criticized, but he does see the light, thanks to Abigail's bold intervention.

Sometimes we may need to intervene / take action to counter those who are arrogant, greedy and prideful.

Sometimes humility needs to be modelled.

That is what Abigail did, and peace was the result,..... and more.

There was peace, David learned a good lesson,..... and he got a wife out of the deal, too.

I imagine Abigail continued to remind David to be humble.

Partners and good friends tend to keep us honest..... in our place: keep us humble.

I may be generalizing, but it sure is the case for me.

Our peace includes being real..... being honest with ourselves and being comfortable in our place..... with who we are.

In addition, living in peace is contagious,.....because humility is granting room for others to live in peace, too.

The two big questions arising from this passage are: who has God called us to be/ what is our place..... and are we humbly helping others to find their place, too?

I Samuel 25:1-3 (paraphrased)

This passage is long and hard to following. I'll make it longer, but easier to understand.

During the time when Saul was King of Israel, David was the *king in waiting*, and Saul felt threatened by that. David and his followers lived out in the wilderness area, and David vowed not to kill Saul or attack his allies, even though King Saul tried to kill David.

Out in the wilderness, David and his group survived by providing "protection" for those who passed through or wanted to use the land for grazing their animals. We would call it extortion, but it was a common practice in those days, since marauding bands were a threat.

Not too far away from the wilderness, there was a very rich man. His name was Nabal, and he was a Calebite. Calebites were Allies with King Saul.

Word spread to David in the wilderness, that Nabal was shearing his sheep, which meant Nabal would be making lots of money. So, since David and his group *protected*, in other words: didn't harm, Nabal's men while they were shepherding Nabal's sheep out in the wilderness, David thought it an opportune time to collect some food and cash from Nabal.

David sent ten young men to Nabal with this message:

Peace be to you and to your house, and peace to all that you have.

David means no harm; however, we heard about the shearing, and because your shepherds were not harmed while in our area, we ask that you show favour to David and these young men by giving them what you have on hand.

The 10 young men went to Nabal and said exactly that, and then waited to receive the goods. But they..... and in essence David were rebuffed.

Nabal's clan was from the tribe of Judah, and they were allies with King Saul.

Nabal's rejecting reply reveals that he regarded David as disloyal to Saul; moreover, it would have been very awkward for him to pay David,.... an enemy to Saul, even though it was customary to pay "protection."

The young men reported the experience to David, and David was insulted.

He was entitled to be paid, and ....his honour was at stake.

David was furious!

He told all his men to get ready for battle—400 did so.

David was going to do vengeance. He intended to kill every male in the Calebite clan. This was not a prudent thing to do because it would enrage King Saul. <

Nevertheless, they moved into position: 200 in the front line and 200 in reserve, and waited until daybreak.

One of the young Calebite shepherds found out what was going on and told Nabal's wife, Abigail. He told her because he knew Nabal was a surly and mean person, and would not react wisely.

Abigail, on the other hand, was clever and also beautiful, remember that part.

The young Calebite told the whole story, including the part about how he and his fellow shepherds were treated well by David.

So, Abigail responded with wisdom and haste, but....she didn't tell her husband about her plans to intercede.

She put together a huge collection of food and goodies in an attempt to dissuade / deter David.

She and her entourage carrying the payment to David, went to David and they met before sunrise.

When they arrived, Abigail hurried to David and humbly fell on her face before David. She praised David, and also said her husband deserves his name.

The word Nabal means fool (Hebrew writers were very creatively humorous).

She begged David to have mercy, and said that Yahweh had sent her to David.

Abigail encouraged David to trust God to do justice, and not be vengeful.

She also told him that he would be King and that everyone would remember how merciful he was.

Plus, she wisely took away David's fear and insecurities by saying that he was special to God and that God would take care of him.

The phrase in verse 29 "bound in the bundle of the living" means one's personal, precious and valuable positions that are always safe guarded.

David was just that to God, is what she told him.

David saw the light and ceased to do vengeance, and ...he was impressed by Abigail.

He praised and blessed her. David received the goods she brought and told her to return in peace.

There will not be an attack.

It is interesting.... that it was a woman who demonstrated mercy and peace.

Her intervention saved hundreds of lives,.... and likely preserved David's rise to the throne, too.

~~~~~

The following verses are Not included in the designated text; however, they're pretty good.

As it turns out, Abigail went home, and then she did tell Nabal about what she had done..

He had a heart attack and died a few days later..... OT poetic justice,.....AND... David ended up making Abigail his wife.

Remember she was wise AND beautiful.

The descendants of David wrote this short story, and of course they want all to know that they have brains and beauty in their genes.