

SOWING SEEDS OF PEACE

Once upon a time the ideal / the paradigm was presented.
Genesis One presents the format for living, for understanding relationships and a better understanding of God.

From this theological exposition we see that God created all things, including our neighbour and our enemy.
When we grasp that, we can grow in our respect and love for all.

Tobias Roberts, who lived and worked in Central America, explained it this way: Genesis one invites us to realize that all that God made is sacred--all plants, creatures and all people. According to Roberts, that which is sacred cannot live with or tolerate violence.

Violence destroys; God creates

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The creation stories present the framework, the canvas for Peace / Shalom.  
Shalom is wholeness; it is atonement with creation, each other and with God. It's about relationship.

Countless passages throughout the Bible are reminders / prompts to call us back to this holy relationship.  
Faith and Trust emanates from Psalm 23 and from the Lord's Prayer.

Peace / atonement requires living one day at a time, no hoarding.  
It demands the creative healing of forgiveness, and it is a life NOT controlled by Fear, but instead by love and trust.

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The interesting thing is that most everyone wants peace.
The sad part is that most don't understand peace or how to find peace.

National leaders often call out for peace.
Generals want peace. Arms dealers want their own little peace.
Bankers, bakers and candlestick makers want peace.

We all want peace..... because life is broken, frightful and painful without peace.

Yet, something happened. Our way of being went terrible wrong.
Humanity lost sight of Real peace. We are a long way off from right relationships, and the Garden of Eden is full of weeds.

Most people have a distorted or narrow view of what peace is and how it is achieved.

Even in Christendom, many do not grasp the meaning of peace/ shalom.

It is NOT uncommon to hear the two kingdom perception. This stance claims that peace is merely personal--one's own peace. Suggesting peace is how we get along with God and our immediate connections. The second kingdom is the secular domain, and that domain is greedy, violent and it does war.

And, since we live in a secular society, Christians are allowed to participate in both kingdoms, and that's okay. Christians can be greedy and go to war, as long as they cultivate their own personal little peace. The rationalization is: a necessary evil can be the means to achieve a greater good,.... such as the Just War Theory.

However, the two kingdom approach rips out the "wholeness" / the unity with God and everything, and thus.....is NOT about peace.

And besides, how can we use evil and destruction to make goodness and justice?

Do we not believe that God creates, that God is over all things, and that God is love?

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Other noxious weeds have blocked / altered the understanding of Peace/wholeness and atonement.

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Two years ago, I was asked by MC Canada to research and write a peace audit for them, that was presented to the World Mennonite Conference.

My research exposed how strong an influence the evangelical revival movement, of 50-60 years ago, had and continues to have on many Mennonite churches.

The core assertion of the revival movement was Blood Atonement -- that Jesus Had to die to pay off / cover the sins of humanity. By default, this declares that God is Not gracious and forgiving, and that God is mean and demands payment for being insulted / rejected.

Blood atonement glosses over the life and message of Jesus/ the arduous journey to wholeness.

It makes Jesus a payment for a debt we owe.

To be sure, some of the NT writers seem to promote this analysis. It did fit into their old temple cult, and it relieved the Jewish Christians of their responsibility of being the people who killed God's son.

It seems that it is easier to accept a currency exchange--Jesus' death for ours-- than it is to embrace God's Grace and love.

Needless to say, blood atonement was not part of Jesus' own understanding of his purpose on earth. He was trying to show the world how to be saved / how to find peace. Jesus lived to save us.

He didn't die to save us. He showed us how to do relationship.

Moreover, blood atonement was Not part of our Anabaptist theology, until the revival movement influence.

According to Palmer Becker, the three main points in his booklet "What is an Anabaptist Christian" are: Jesus is the centre of our faith.

Community is the centre of our lives.

Reconciliation is the centre of our work.

We Anabaptists, traditionally, have appreciated the journey to wholeness and atonement. We didn't try to "Cash" in Jesus.

We lived to be more like Jesus. That was/is our journey to peace.

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In addition, the ugly side of blood atonement is that it can be used to rationalize war. More and more we are hearing, "Soldiers had to fight and die so that we can be free." That's rubbish,..... and it is downright insulting.

In other words, we can have peace and freedom if we cash in the lives of some soldiers,.....oh..... and maybe some innocent civilians will get caught in the fray, too. And, are the enemy soldiers' death part of the deal, also.... or merely more collateral damage in the pursuit of our own freedom and peace?

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We used to have a healthier attitude about war.

"Never again" **was** the cry on Remembrance Day.

That is the honest cry from a soldier who experienced war and from a nation who regrets the death and destruction.

But we CAN'T say that anymore because..... we are building up our military; we are willing to engage in war.

We dare Not remember the truth; we cannot lament war.

How can we expend people and do destruction if we regret war?

So, we are writing a new narrative / forming a new picture of history.

And subsequently, we now shamefully have a War museum.

Another example: the current propaganda declares that the death of 3,598 Canadians at Vimy Ridge, during the Great War, gave life to our country.

The truth is they died taking a hill with little strategic importance.

It didn't make a difference. It was a total waste, but... it was a pure Canadian waste.

But that storyline is ugly and painful. And, we think peace is feeling good and conquering our enemies.

So, we glorify the tragedy, so that we'll feel good about ourselves.

And, if we hear something enough times, we tend to believe it, but. . . . that still doesn't make it true.

Oh, and by the way, there is no accurate count of the Germans killed at Vimy Ridge. The victors didn't care about wholeness.

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It's just sad, terribly sad..... because glorifying war makes us more willing to do war, because we think that war gives us peace and freedom.

And, .... the grieving and the survivors will have to weave more fabricated stories to cope with the needless murder and destruction.

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How did we get to this point? What went terribly wrong?

How did we come to believe that peace is the opposite of war, and that war can bring peace?

How did the toxic weeds of greed, lust and deception take over?

How did we become so full of fear?

Why are we controlled by fear?

What are we missing?

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Moreover, is Psalm 23 and the Lord's Prayer merely an idealistic notion that we lift up in church and discard the rest of the week?

And does it matter? There are so many toxic weeds sucking the life out of everyone and....stealing true peace.

There is so much fear,..... and destruction is considered an acceptable means to an end. The world is a mess.

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Nevertheless,..... we do not need to be afraid.

We do NOT have to be controlled by fear and lies.

There is hope; There is Good News.

We are resurrection people. Our narrative is NOT about death; it is about life; it's about restoration and redemption.

God has given us seeds of love, justice and grace.

A New Creation is possible, and.... when it grows it will overwhelm all the weeds of fear, death and destruction.

We can / we must engage in God's way--the way of Christ.

We can grant and embrace grace instead of sacrificial death, and that's a powerful seed.

We can plant seeds of truth through our lives, our words.... and through highway signs.

We can honour our enemies as being part of God's creation. We can respect them, listen to them and learn common interests.

We can proclaim and model seeds of justice, and they grow into beautiful Jubilee flowers.

We can care for creation.... because, after all, we are all in this life together. The seeds of humble unity nurtures all that is good and just.

And finally, in the pursuit of peace.....AND... to counter the influence of war,.....we can DO ART.
We can make art.

Creativity is the opposite of destruction.
War is destruction, and so art is the opposite of war.

Celebrating God's nature of creativity by doing ART is a wonderful way to grow peace.
Doing Art is being creative, and art comes in many forms, not just drawing.
Art can be hard work.....and that may be necessary to overcome destruction.
Art forces our minds to search for a new way and a new expressions.
Art feeds hope, and it helps us to express our inner selves.

DO ART..... and don't worry about the final product.
The process is worthy and good,..... and peace is actually the final product.

Do Art. Do Grace. Do Justice and be loving and forgiving--

All are holy, divine seeds that help us grow into peace.

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Everybody wants peace.  
Unfortunately, most are feeding off weeds and wondering what's wrong.  
The world needs New life--real peace.  
The world needs redemption / to be one with God and all things.

Sow seeds for peace,..... and watch a new world come to life.

There is hope.  
God has Not given up on us,..... and God is still creating.  
Let us join in that journey. Let us truly put our faith in God.