

SEEDS FOR PEACE

Once a year, we do peace Sunday. We intentionally focus on peace: as a reminder, as a discipline, and....to inform and equip us with the peace message.

The peace message is an essential part of who we are and what we do. We are a church who proclaims and lives peace all year long, and that is wonderful. OMC is very active doing peace.

Today I am speaking to the choir. WE need to be recharged and refreshed..... because we live in a world that is hostile to Christ's message of peace.

MCC's material for Peace Sunday was called a "Peaceful Revolution", and we have used some of that material and the Old Testament passage.

I used a different title for my sermon, but I think the Revolution theme is appropriate. We need to **revolt** against the lies and injustices of war and militarism. We must expose the lies and stand up against injustices.

For example, we are being told there are many noble and lofty reasons for supporting the military mission in Afghanistan. Yet, not long ago, former Chief of Defence Staff, General Hillier admitted that after our country said no to supporting the US in their invasion of Iraq, he knew we'd have to go into combat somewhere in the world to pay back the Americans. Therefore, according to Hillier, Canadians are killing and being killed because we owed "One" to President Bush. "Ante up" doesn't sound like a good reason for dying, and things are getting worse, not better, in Afghanistan, anyways.

Our calling is to expose the lies and present another message / another way – God's way with the clarity of Christ and, in this case, with the words of Micah.

According to the Micah 4 text, we are invited us to Come Together to a holy place to be taught God's way, and when we do we will CHANGE – the People will change. And, we will put our new values into action: we will beat our weapons into tools for cultivation – tools that feed people instead of killing people.

** Pause for a second, and take that in. THAT message is in the *OT*; it's an image of transformation – BEATING / RADICALLY changing....from destruction to creation! []

There will be NO more war, and the PEOPLE will NOT learn war. The people will NOT study war.

AND, this is the crucial part: NO ONE WILL BE MADE TO FEAR.

Please tell that to CNN and FOX news.
NO ONE WILL BE MADE TO FEAR!

We need to hear this to because our culture is changing into a culture of fear and war. We need to take heed!

We have a ways to go until we become like the Americans, but we are heading in that direction.

By the way, I'm not picking on individual Americans, just their culture as a whole; they have chosen their path, and it has been different than ours. Their's **is** a culture of war, greed and fear.

For example, even our traffic signs are different, as my friend from Kansas noted, last weekend. We have chosen the words "Important Intersection" to prompt drivers to be alert. The American equivalent would read "DANGEROUS intersection" I suppose because most people there already live in a state of heightened alert, and would ignore anything less intense.

My friend laughed at the sign's gentle message, and I responded, "Why make people needlessly afraid?"

WHY be needlessly afraid?

Fear is a characteristic of the culture of war, and we are drifting into that culture.

This past week, the "loaded" question "Lest We Forget" was ubiquitous.

****Lest we forget WHAT? Lest we forget WHY?... or Who?**

If the implication is "WHO", then we can just say "NEVER again" or "We remember the loss."

But THAT ambiguous, suggestive question—"Lest we Forget"— possesses the growing chorus of,,,, WE NEED War!....

We Must fight, die and kill for our country and our freedom, and all that assumption is a lie, and NOT the way of Christ.

// A government CAN NOT grant freedom, it can only take it away.

More and more we are hearing the lies from a Culture of War, such as the infatuation for protecting our arctic sovereignty.

If arctic land is trespassed upon, who will attack? The USA, Russia... or perhaps Norway???

Come on..... Pop that narrative; it is just a bunch of chest thumping to bloat the military budget.

Expose the lies

We **are** becoming a culture of war.

We hardly notice anymore the military presence at sports events.

There is no coincidence in the fact that the military shadow hangs over actives that enthrall young men and women of recruiting age.

The culture of war preys on the young ... while the rest are frozen with fear.

And, we have much to be afraid of..... according to our culture's mainstream media..... But do we really?

Moreover, our country is dropping the notion of being peacekeepers in the world, and the study guide for becoming a Canadian citizen is being changed to include glorifications of the military.

**Let us NOT study war anymore, and let us not engage in the language and the charade of war, either. Instead let us expose the lies and do peace.

Marshall McLuhan said, “There are no passengers on spaceship earth. We are all crew.” I take it as an admonition. McLuhan means that in order for the earth to have a better flight, we **all** must be active.

As followers of Christ and bearers of the messages of Peace – We must be proactive. As Jesus did we must go into the Gentile area with our message, and Not stay at home and remain quiet.

Yet, the Culture of War can feel overwhelming, ...and most interesting: those in the throngs of **That** culture get very defensive and even angry when their assumptions are challenged. I find that most interesting.... why the anger.... when confronted or questioned?

And then, the defenders of Redemptive Violence counter with their Questions of Entrapment– questions with faulty premises and untruths.

I don't know how many times I've heard the argument for redemptive violence using the example, "WHAT if bad guys broke into your home? If you had a gun, I bet you'd shoot them to protect your family? You'd have to protect your family."

That scenario is NOT a Sarah Palin “gotcha” moment.

The violent break-in scenario is based on an intense fear of the boogeyman / of evil people out to get good people, and that assumption is not true. Please don't fall for that fear laden myth.

The chances of being a victim of a violent break-in by strangers are very, very small. It is safe to say, that you and I do NOT have to answer that question. In addition, statistics reveal that introducing a weapon into a chaotic and volatile break-in only makes the situation worse, much worse. Lights, a barking dog, calmness and a transforming initiative all work much better in defusing an aggressive action.

Even so, the premise is wrong. There are NOT evil people out there trying to get at you and me. We do not have to fear.

>I think fear steals oxygen from the brain, and causes people to come up with crazy entrapping questions.

Another unimaginative attempt to entrap is the string of World War Two questions. Such as what would you do with Adolf Hilter?

The best advice for dealing with all the Hilters of history, and they are only a few, is to take away their power before they can do harm.

The best way is to not focus on them, but rather strive to deal with others in the country who are more reasonable and open minded.

Labelling them as part of an “AXIS of Evil” serves to empower them.

In addition, patience, searching for common interests, encouraging openness, and improving cultural exchanges all are productive ways leading contentious nations down a path to peace instead of war.

**WE Can use our minds in creative ways. We don't have to build weapons for war. We can build tools that nourish life.

Saddam Hussein did not have weapons of mass destruction. The policy of openness had worked. The Netherlands proposed a wonderful plan in early 2003 that included patience and de-powering Saddam.

Yet, the president of the United States did NOT know an another way, and the old answer to the question: What to do with Tyrants? prevailed,and thousands and thousands have died.

Even so, WW II seemed so “Just and pure”, and so the defenders of redemptive violence, ignore Iraq and go back to WW II to state their case.

For the choir / to inform, here are some insights:

– WW II was a continuation of WW I. The war to end all wars failed because war can not bring peace. It never has and never will.

– Should we have let Germany occupy Poland and France?

Well, there is another way to respond to aggressors besides fight or flight.

But, most don't learn that way. Yet, that aside for now, when engaging in arguments of reason, then we must use reason.

With that said, why was it okay for England to occupy India for so many years,..... but not okay for Germany to do occupation? ??

The victors write the history books,..... with a bias.

And, they write that WWII was fought by the righteous for freedom and democracy, thus the killing and deaths were justified.

We tend to speak for the dead. I wonder what they would say, if they could speak? And, we were not so righteous.

Also, the war was not fought to prevent the slaughter of the Jews and other groups. That excuse was added later.

In fact, the “final solution” / the killings by the Nazis were a response to the violence the Allies initiated. Violence begets violence. Research has revealed the correlation between increased violence against Germany and Germany's reaction of doing violence upon its captives.

Feeding the whirlwind only creates more destruction for everyone.

And, it needs to be said that WWII did NOT bring peace, just as defeating Germany in 1918 did not bring peace.

The Marshall Plan brought peace with Germany and Japan. The Marshall Plan was a way of turning enemies into friends, and that is way that Jesus said worked, 2,000 years ago.

And finally, as a follower of Christ, I just can't image Jesus leading the way with his gun mowing down people.

I shared these responses to equip the choir, But,.....I've gone too far. My last comment was judgmental, and therefore not productive in the pursuit of healing and wholeness.

We... the bearers of the way of Peace must be careful. The way of Peace / our belief system makes more sense. The arguments for redemptive violence all fail apart unless the goal is revenge, conquest and domination. War does not bring peace, and we know this.

Yet, sound logic and better reasoning is not enough. **We** need to be astute and informed so that **we will not** be deceived; however,..... I don't think I've ever changed one person's opinion with all my Good arguments.

I've studied history and the peace position extensively, and I've never persuaded anyone to my opinion, by sheer power of the debate. In fact, there have been times that my passion for peace was counter productive. My energy for changing people to be a pacifist did NOT alter any swords or spears..... and may have cause some to wish they had a sword handy.

Referring to the Micah text:
NO ONE WILL BE MADE TO FEAR!

The Culture of War is fed by fear, and a conquering argument usually takes away or devalues another's position – leaving emptiness and fear.

There is already TOO MUCH Fear in the world, including in Canada.

So, Let us work to take away the proverbial lions, tigers and bears.

Let us strive to reduce the level of fear in our culture, and not assume that we are right and everyone else is wrong.

Let us comfort the hurting and fearful; let us mourn with those who mourn. Let us grieve with a soldier as we retain who we are.

Let us reduce the fear,...Which means, we begin by reducing the fear within ourselves.

We all look pretty silly when we proclaim to the world our message of peace while we have our own personal war waging within us.

Peace begins within with our relationship with God and our honest comfort level with LOVE.

In truth, do we trust that God is love and that God loves us?

Are we confident that love prevails and do we love ourselves enough to trust we don't have to fight for our survival.

Think about that one:love brings contentment and a sense of safety.

Jesus calls us to be the peace and to radiate that peace with words and actions.

Finding our own inner peace and mindfulness is not enough.

There are swords to transform and fears to overcome.

I agree with MCC's theme of a peaceful revolution, yet I see that revolution happening by planting SEEDS of PEACE.

MC Canada has challenged all churches to take the message of Peace out into the Public Square through proclamation, and let us do that with grace and love.

May our message bring hope and comfort, and not anger and fear.

The insert in the bulletin contains other examples for Doing Peace.

And, I would add to that list – ART.

Art is the opposite of war, so let us do art and encourage others to do art.

I think that the reduction of art training, including music, in our schools is a reflection of our shift to a culture of war.

Do art, and I love that our children do art during the worship service.

We are a peace church, and we affirm ART.

I believe that following Christ is being the peace, inside and out.

Therefore, with assertive tenderness, let us confront the lies, and with gracious boldness let us stand up against injustices as we reduce the level of fear in our world..... ever mindful that we must not race ahead of our message and our calling.

We plant seeds of peace, and trust the creator for the rest.

We are not the saviour, nor are we warriors for justice and righteousness. By the grace of God, we merely follow Christ and plant seeds.

In closing, Listen to these words by Percy Ainswort:

“No moral effort that has for its final issue only the destruction of sin can hope to be successful. The motive is inadequate, and the undertaking is impracticable. You cannot fight the moral battle armed with negatives, no matter how sound those negatives may be. Jesus did not come to destroy thorns. He came to grow fir trees. He did not come to uproot briars. He came to plant [fruit trees].

As the one grows the other dies. Instead of the useless shall come up the serviceable; instead of the ugly shall come up the beautiful; instead of the thing that wounds shall come up the thing that heals. This principle of displacement, this ousting of evil,... by good, runs through the teaching of Jesus.”

From a Thornless World by Percy Ainsworth

Be the peace..... in your daily life, in your business affairs, at the store, at home, with your friends and family.

Be the peace with yourself.

All over the world, people are killing and dying for the culture of war.

All we have to do is rise up and live as God intended for us to live.

Grow and live! Share the love and peace of Christ; plant seeds of peace.