

The Demands of Kingdom Peace-Making
based on Luke 10:13-24, David Jahnke, 10/30/16

Last week we talked about the disciples being sent out in pairs to announce the coming of God's Kingdom. And how everything happening around them testified to this truth. People were welcoming them as strangers into their homes. People were housing, feeding and caring for them just as the disciples were caring for and healing the sick in their villages. Former strangers were becoming friends as listened to each other while breaking bread.

And all of this was a continuation of what the disciples had experienced in village after village with their rabbi whose name was Jesus. The most wonderful and challenging part was that they were experiencing this not only with righteous Jews but with sinners and lepers and Samaritans and even from time to time with Romans!

So the heart and soul of what was happening was forgiveness. You do not hang out with sinners, heretics or oppressive foreign occupiers without knowing that God has forgiven them and wants to welcome them into His Kingdom. The King, after all, was welcoming and break bread with them.

Believing in and making peace was also central which is, of course, what follows on the heels of forgiveness. In the Kingdom, there is animosity among various peoples; no more animosity among those who believe differently, who have different ways of life; even among those who have hurt each other.

This peace of Christ which transcends all worldviews has gained ground in our globalized and multi-cultural world. And we can either take hold of this movement of the Spirit or we can remain trapped in judgment and animosity toward the religious and cultural other. That was a rejection of the Spirit even in Jesus' day. How much more obviously is it one in our pluralistic world today when we know so much more about what we have in common and can communicate so much better and have progressed so much in love and peace. Jesus says we have to go so far as to even forgive and share peace with the individual and/ or the group which has sinned against us, much less the one who looks or believes or lives differently than we do!

This brings us to the cultural and historical context of Jesus' prophetic judgments against these cities in today's passage. First we need to remember that almost all biblical prophecy is about how God is at work in current events and what will be the result of doing or rejecting God's will. We have had so much terrible apocalyptic end-time interpretation of biblical prophesy over the last 25 years that we do not even know how to understand our lord and savior as a prophet in the same manner as Israelite prophets who came before him. He's more than a prophet but he was that!

So here is Jesus' context: the Romans were ruling and there was very strong anti-Roman zeal. All Jews knew what crucifixions were because they were happening all around. Jesus saw these and other consequences of his brethren choosing revenge and rising up against the Romans instead of forgiving them. He also had visions of where all of this would end up.

His vision was that Hell would be unleashed upon the Galilean villages that rejected the peace of the coming Kingdom of God, as it would to Jerusalem to which Jesus also cried "Woe!" to as he looked upon the city of God from a hill and foresaw the horror that would descend upon her because they would reject him and his message. His prophecies came true between 66 and 70 a.d. as the Romans first squashed uprisings in the countryside, and then said enough is enough and destroyed Jerusalem and killed thousands of innocents.

There are important lessons for our nation today. I saw the documentary filmmaker Michael Moore ranting about why he thinks Donald Trump will win. And while I disagree with much of what he said, he is mostly right about why Donald is so popular among lower to lower-middles class whites. They have seen industry and other blue-collar work leave their communities and no jobs replacing it. Moore alluded to Trump's coming to Michigan and dropping the bomb-- Moore's words-- and saying, "Well if a GM and Ford want to make cars in Mexico, I will tax them so highly that noone will but them."

Now these blue-collar communities are suffering tremendously. But these jobs are not coming back. And I think it is part of God's plan that poor and developing nations might receive the prosperity of industry. And at the same time, the wise and intelligent and powerful who have not paid sufficient attention to the call of Jesus to the poor in these difficult times need to consider how to move our citizens into the science, technology, information and service economies of the developed world.

I am worried about what might happen if we do not find solutions. Because there is a growing revolutionary fervor in our own nation. There is an anti-authoritarianism; a kind of demonizing of the powerful from so many. And with a citizenry which is armed like no other citizenry in history...well...

Our communities have the same choice as the villages in Jesus' day. We either let peace, love and mercy be the unshakable foundations of the Kingdom of Heaven at hand-- welcoming the stranger, sharing peace with those who are different, forgiving the sinner, trusting in the anointing of God upon our leaders, respecting and caring for the poor -- or else the fires of Hell will be unleashed (or rather will continue to be unleashed as we see it happening already.)

We all have righteous grievances against the powers that be just like Jews did against theirs. So as leaders...and we all are...we must hear and help people address these grievances. They must be shown the alternatives to the life and vocations they have known and be shown how to move into them. New vo-tech training is needed for older adults as well as younger...and most importantly, we need a deeper commitment to our children's education. We have to demand that our children study hard from pre-K through college. We are falling behind too much of the world and can be complacent no more.

Just yesterday, I had the joy of teaching Dietrich how to do some pre-algebra. It was a bit frustrating, especially to him, but with sufficient praise and strength, it felt rewarding in the end.

I have heard a couple of times lately about the vocabulary differences between toddlers from lower and higher economic backgrounds. By even 2-years old, there is a huge difference because of the resources and attention that higher-income children are exposed to. This strongly suggests that universal pre-K can have a huge impact on children of poor and blue-collar families. How could we possibly think that only those who can afford 2 more years of education at a hugely important age should get it?

And all of these difficult cultural changes are not only possible; they are probable because they are all led by the Spirit of God which is always furthering truth, peace and love. The Spirit brought an entirely new view of the world to Israel and called people to a new training and discipleship according to that worldview. It happened then; and it can happen again.

All of this applies to dynamics within families and individuals as well. I know a family with three daughters whose parents abused alcohol as their children were growing up so there were all kinds of problems associated with this. The youngest daughter who suffered the greatest trauma has been unable to forgive or find peace. The deceit and condemnation of the devil have kept her trapped in trauma and estrangement from her immediate and extended family and all of this has made her life a living Hell.

But her older sisters have found it in their hearts to forgive their now sober parents and their reconciliation along with the psychological health they have enjoyed all testify to the power of forgiveness, peace and new life.

So we have to decide what to do about broken-ness in our own and the extended family of God. The disciples were wonderfully astonished at how Jesus' message and Spirit drove out the demons that were destroying individuals and families. Our work is the same. Letting people know that God is near; his Word is on their lips whenever they speak the truth; his Spirit working through them whenever they share kind words; his peace and forgiveness everpresent.

On November 9th, the day after election day, our peace-making work will take on a new importance as our people will have to choose the path of cynicism, suspicion, conspiracy and mutual judgment or the path of trust, reconciliation, and mutual healing. You know which path Jesus is on so get on it and call others to it.

I ask you to join me in spreading that message that the Kingdom is near and be a part of the healing of the broken-ness within and among peoples through sharing peace which passes all our understandings.

The one sister I know well

Forgiveness is not an option if we want peace.

When Jesus tells disciples that destruction is coming to entire communities that have rejected him and his message, we must first consider the political and historical context of this message.

A revolution is called for but it

And generally speaking, those little ones left behind believe in Jesus while the intelligent and wise dismiss him as a radical prophet from a world long gone.

So when Jesus prophesied judgment upon Galilean villages (where anti-Roman zeal was particularly strong and common); and when he eventually does the same regarding Jerusalem as he overlooks the wonderful city of God, he is foreseeing what the Romans will do if the people choose violent revolution instead of peaceful coexistence.

Time for our communities to return to belief in God; faith in Jesus and his message of the nearness of God's Kingdom. For many Americans, this involves a broadening of their understanding of the Christian faith. It is not just about believing Jesus died for my sins and going to heaven because of it. Faith in Jesus is faith in what he believed in-- that is that all human beings are beloved by God and worthy of fellowship and sustenance and health and life. Faith in Jesus is faith in love and peace and welcome and justice and anyone involved in these ministries is receiving His Spirit and are thus our brothers and sisters in him. The bigger our Jesus is, the better!