

Luke 17:5-10
Philippians 4:4-9
October 3, 2010

May Peace Prevail

Two cars are waiting at a stoplight. The light turns green, but the man in front doesn't notice it. A woman in the car behind him is watching traffic pass around them. She begins pounding on her steering wheel and yelling at the man to move. The woman is going ballistic inside her car, ranting and raving at the man, pounding on her steering wheel and dash. The light turns yellow. The woman begins to blow the car horn, flips him off, and screams curses. The man, finally hearing the commotion, looks up, sees the yellow light and accelerates through the intersection just as the light turns red. The woman is beside herself, screaming in frustration as she misses her chance to get through the intersection. Still in mid-rant she hears a tap on her window and looks up into the face of a very serious looking policeman.

The policeman arrests the now speechless woman who is driven to the police station where she is fingerprinted, photographed, searched, booked and placed in a cell. After a couple of hours, a policeman approaches escorts the woman back to the booking desk

where the original officer is waiting with her personal effects. He hands her the bag containing her things, and says, "I'm really sorry for this mistake ma'am, but you see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, flipping that guy off, and cussing a blue streak at the car in front of you. Then I noticed the "What Would Jesus Do" and "Follow Me to Sunday School" bumper stickers, and the chrome plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk, and the decals to Annapolis Area Christian School, the cross hanging from your mirror, so naturally I assumed you had stolen the car."

Today is Peacemaking and World Communion Sunday in our church. We have dedicated a Peace Pole and so I would like us each to ponder what ripples of peace we are sending into the world. I think the reason the joke is funny is because we as Christians know that all too often we lose it, we flip people off, we sow discontent in our families, our work places and communities and we let anger get the better of us. Nobody is perfect and some days are way more stressful than others; but I'll bet the majority of us in this room could do more to sow seeds of peace in the world.

Paul writes in his letters to his dear friends in Philippi that the Peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard our

hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Paul would have us rejoice. Paul would have us show gentleness to everyone. Paul would have offer prayers of supplication and thanksgiving. Rejoicing, gentleness and prayer – these are the things that lead us to peace.

I am rejoicing today. I was excited to come to church. I love World Communion Sunday and I love our new Peace Pole. The Peace Pole was a gift to our church by our 11:00 AM Adult Sunday School Class called Open View. The Peace Pole was strategically placed at the center of a garden which Adam Biondolillo enhanced with the flag stone path and benches as a part of his Eagle Scout Project. I think the class and Adam have created an outdoor sacred place where people from our church and community can come to meditate and pray. I think creating sacred places on church properties and at home are acts that help to heal and sooth a world smothered in violence, demagoguery and self absorption. My hope is that this place of peace, this garden of peace might also be enhanced by some Peace Roses and an occasional effort at landscape maintenance.

The Prayer on the Peace Pole is a simple supplication offered humbly to God in 12 languages. May peace prevail on earth. The

languages on our peace pole mean something to our Church. Our congregation is made up of people of African, European and Asian descent. Chinese, Russian, Korean, Spanish and Swahili therefore grace the pole. May Peace Prevail on Earth. Greek and Hebrew are the two main Biblical Languages both the Old and New Testaments urge us to work for peace. All are loved by God and entitled to God's peace especially those who face physical challenges, so there is Sign Language and Brail. The Middle East is a flash point in geopolitics and Islam and Judaism are the other two great monotheistic religions on our globe. Although we are different and profess Christ as Lord and Savior, we have much in common with our Moslem and Jewish sisters and brothers and so in addition to Hebrew, Arabic and is on our peace Pole. Lakota Sioux, and Spanish are on the Pole because of our congregational ties to Guatemala and The Lakota Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. There are twelve languages to help unite us with brothers and sisters around the world and there are paw prints which although not a language, remind us that we share the world with animals as well as people and very often humanity perpetrates violence on the wild things of the world.

“The Peace Pole Project is the official Project of The World Peace Prayer Society. It started in Japan in 1955 by Masahisa Goi, who decided to dedicate his life to spreading the message, “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in response to the bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Peace Poles are handcrafted ... international symbols of Peace. Their purpose is to spread the message “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in the languages of the world.

Mr. Goi believed that Peace begins in the heart and mind of each individual. As war begins with thoughts of war, Peace begins with thoughts of Peace. The Peace Pole reminds us to keep Peace ever-present in our thoughts. As we learn to honor one another, our environment, plants, animals and all creation on Earth, the vision of global Peace will gradually become a natural way of life, a true culture of Peace.”¹

Paul urges us in his letter to the Philippians to let our gentleness be known to everyone. Everyday we have a choice; we can live as gentle people, we can live life with a revolutionary patience, we can refuse to play the tit for tat game or we can raise the

¹ Peacepoles.com homepage September 30, 2010

ante and flip the bird. We live in a culture where people brag that they really went off on him or they really went ballistic on her. They are proud of their antagonism. But as long as we are flipping the bird and cussing people out, we are sending ripples of pain into the world. Our status as the world military superpower more often gives us a swagger rather than a thoughtfulness or humbleness about opportunity costs or how we responsibly wield this power.

Paul would have us pray and rejoice, Paul would have us share gentleness. I think that even when kindness goes un-thanked, mercy is unappreciated and efforts are not acknowledged, we should not get discouraged because it still changes the world. Gentleness turns down the volume and makes peace possible. Likewise when we engage in acts of mission, mercy, kindness and justice in the world, pain is healed and compassion is carried forward. Jesus said if we have faith even the size of a mustard seed we can do amazing things. When we make changes in our lives it changes the world. When we make big changes in our lives they carry with them the possibility of greatly changing the world. I don't own any stock or have any policies with Liberty Mutual Insurance Company but I do love this commercial.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMwoexR1evo>

10 people are helped or witness people receiving help and each one then is inspired to carry that spirit of kindness and gentleness forward. Their lives become prayer. Their acts of mission mercy and justice multiply and even flow in a circle back to them.

And now you are invited to receive an act of kindness. You are invited to sit at table with 2 billion other Christians on this day of peace and world communion. You are invited to receive peace into your life. You are invited to accept the real presence of Christ into your life. Though we are the ones who should honor God and serve God; God serves us now at this table. God grants us unearned and undeserved grace, simply because it gives God joy to do so. You are invited to take this grace, God's gentle presence and infectious joy, this peace which surpasses all understanding from this place into the world.