

No Greater Love

Remembrance Sunday Micah 6/ John 15 November 7, 2021

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“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mk12:30-31) Last Sunday we heard Jesus say there is nothing more important in our lives than to love- to love God with our whole being and to love each other.

Because that love, the love we show to God and others and the love we receive from God and others, guides us and directs us and show us the meaning and purpose and intention of life. And with that in mind, we come to this week’s reading from John’s gospel where Jesus talks about his love for the disciples and his journey to the cross.

For the truth is that God asks us to love deeply and completely because that is what God does. That is the story of Jesus. Jesus teaches of God’s love, shares God’s love in his life and then Jesus gives all, sacrifices all when he lays down his life for the people he loves, for us. And in his death on the cross, Jesus truly reveals the extent and the power of God’s love for you and for me.

And I say that because Jesus’ death, his choice to accept the cross, is the way God changes our world and our lives. We stand here this day knowing that death is not the end, that hatred and fear can be overcome, and that God intends something more and something greater for our lives. Jesus calls to us in the resurrection to love each other as deeply and as fully as he loves us and to follow in his way. And he tells us and shows us that our love, expressed through our efforts and our lives, will continue to transform the world.

During the week leading up to November 11th we remember. We remember those who served and sacrificed for our nation during the First and Second World Wars, in Korea, on peacekeeping missions, and in Afghanistan. We wear the poppy, we think about family, friends, and neighbors.

We pause and remember the names of those who died far from home. We remember those who returned from war broken in body, mind and spirit. We remember those who served and what they did and what they offered for the sake of our land and our world. And as we remember we see the cost which was paid so that war might end and peace might be restored.

And I think it is important as we remember those individuals that we don't forget the circumstances which led to war. When nations made agreements which allowed aggression and violence to go unchecked. When diplomacy failed because leaders were blinded by their own propaganda. When arrogance and stupidity meant the world stumbled into conflict and bloodshed. Because remembrance is not about glorifying the past but remembering the truth of what happened no matter how difficult.

And in the same way I think it is equally important that we remember the courage and bravery which led the men and women to come forward and offer everything in order to try and bring the world back to peace. To remember why they put themselves in danger. To remember what they had to do so that we might have a chance for something greater. So that we understand that peace is something that each and every generation has to work for and want in the world. Peace does not simply happen. Peace requires our work, our effort, and our commitment.

Because this time of year we remember that peace is more than the absence of war. Peace begins when the guns are silent and people aren't dying on battlefields. But peace, lasting and meaningful peace, only happens when there is cooperation, opportunity, and justice in the world. Peace is what takes place when we work, when we strive for a better tomorrow by doing just what we do on Remembrance day- learning from the past to see what needs to change in the present in order to build a better future for everyone.

And the future we look toward in faith is one where the world isn't on edge and always anxious about the possibility of war. Where people don't live in fear of conflict and violence. Where people can build something that lasts and raise their families and enjoy life and all that God has given us. That is the vision described in the first reading of a world where nations no longer study and prepare for war, where people work and enjoy the bounty of creation, where people actively seek peace for their lives and for the lives of their neighbours.

Because notice that while it is the vision of God's peace - a time and a place which God has ordained and is moving us toward- that there is a role for the people living within it. Because we are the ones who are to gather and talk in order to bring understanding and harmony. We are the ones to beat the swords into plowshares in other words we are the ones asked to take the energy and reliance on war and violence and change it into something where there is growth and possibility. The reading from Micah is clear that these things happen because people of faith, people acting as God

asks, make that peace, that future happen. And that brings me back to the gospel lesson.

Because the truth is that to build the promised future we need to love so deeply and so completely that we are willing to give of our talents, our abilities, our efforts in order to make this world better and to foster peace among nations. And to get that peace we can't ignore the climate emergency which is going to further stress relations between countries. We can't ignore the longstanding grievance which simmer between peoples. We can't ignore the injustice and inequality which lead to desperation and violence.

Because to see a real and lasting peace we need to live with respect in creation and work to prevent ecological disasters. We have to listen to each other, as communities and nations, openly and honestly taking responsibility for the sins of the past. We have to build a better society so there is opportunity and possibility for everyone.

And the way we get to peace and that better world, the way we change this world and break patterns of hatred and hurt, is through the love which Jesus shows us. A love which seeks the common good. A love which sees our neighbor as a friend. A love which is willing to give and share and sacrifice. That is how we preserve the good we have and that is how we right the wrongs which still exist. By loving so deeply and so completely that we make the world change as a result.

And yes I know that means that we are going to have to make some real changes in our lives, we will have to listen carefully and honestly to understand the problems of the world, and we will have to commit ourselves to making things better right now to bring us closer to what we want and need and what God calls us to.

So take time this week to remember. Consider the history that is behind us and be aware of what has happened in our world today. And then open your hearts and minds to what God is asking and calling you and all of us to do in order to bring about a better world.

A world that we want for ourselves and the generations who come after us. A world where peace is not simply a hope but a reality for all people. A world which comes about when we love one another as Jesus loves us.