

A reflection on Peace

(Rosie Hoad August 2020)

Jesus said: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”
(John 14: 27)



What does the word “**peace**” mean to you?

- **The absence of war?** This week marks 75 years since the end of the Second World War (VJ day is 15th August). Whilst VE Day (Victory in Europe) marked the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, many thousands of Armed Forces personnel were still engaged in bitter fighting in the Far East. Those marker points of remembering reminds us that peace comes at great cost.
- **The absence of noise?** When the lockdown began in March this year I was very struck by how quiet things were outside – the planes all but stopped, and the traffic much reduced. The world was hushed and the birdsong became much clearer.
- **The absence of inner turmoil?** So much has been turned upside down by this pandemic and we’ve had to adapt and respond to so much change and uncertainty, to deal with anxieties and fears and work out what it all means for our own life, relationships and actions.

I wonder what you think Jesus meant when he said “my peace I leave with you” before he died – speaking to his friends who would be scattered, afraid, bereaved and persecuted?

Spend a few minutes thinking about peace not so much as an absence of war, or noise, or chaos, but as the presence of God in the middle of all the things that trouble us. The Hebrew word for peace is “shalom” which carries a sense of wholeness and well-being in all areas of life. A sense of wholeness and completeness that comes from being a child of God, loved and precious, and held through the storms of life. Here’s a blessing of peace from the bible which you might like to pray for our community and world:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. (Numbers 6: 24-26)

A poem about the peace of Christ

The following poem by Malcolm Guite invites us deeper into what it might mean to live the peace of Christ. In his words of introduction to the poem he says that the peace Christ gives us is not what the world gives, but “something different: living, active, creatively seeking reconciliation, proclaiming love even to enemies”. He invites us to reflect on how that peace becomes prayer, and prayer becomes that peace.



“The image that came to me in the poem was of prayer itself patiently picking the locks on the chains of unforgiveness that bind us, and then we, of our own choice, once freed, seeking and assisting, in prayer and in life, the very people, with whom we have not had peace before. Not easy, and only possible, like all forgiveness, if we know in our hearts that we have ourselves been completely forgiven.” (Malcolm Guite)

“Peace” (A Sonnet by Malcolm Guite)

Not as the world gives, not the victor’s peace,
Not to be fought for, hard-won, or achieved,
Just grace and mercy, gratefully received:
An undeserved and unforeseen release,
As the cold chains of memory and wrath
Fall from our hearts before we are aware,
Their rusty locks all picked by patient prayer,
Till closed doors open, and we see a path
Descending from a source we cannot see;
A path that must be taken, hand in hand,
Only by those, forgiving and forgiven,
Who see their saviour in their enemy.
So reach for me. We’ll cross our broken land,
And make each other bridges back to Heaven.