

Lectionary A December 4, 2016 2nd Sunday in Advent
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, Indiana
Pastor Roberta Meyer

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

Peace isn't Quiet

No wonder some people didn't like Jesus I mean, look at who his relatives are! From Adam and Eve, the list of those who come from the "root of Jesse", are a bunch of troublemakers. There's Abraham who nearly killed his own son obeying God. Then his son Isaac and his son Jacob connived his twin brother out of his birthright. Joseph, with his coat of many colors, was "daddy's favorite" and was sold by his brothers just to get rid of him. Moses stuttered. Rahab was a prostitute. Samson lost his hair over a Delilah. Jesse, the one whose roots we are talking about was the father of David. David, the king with the harp, was an adulterer and a murderer. Jonah was fish bait. Mary and Joseph sure weren't material most people would select to be parents of a king—a carpenter and an unwed pregnant teenager, after all.

And here today, we meet Jesus' cousin John the Baptist in all his glory. "*John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.*" And talk about troublemaker. When the temple leaders came to the river where cousin John was baptizing everyone he didn't exactly make them feel welcomed. Here's the scene from the Message Bible.

"When John realized that a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees were showing up for a baptismal experience because it was becoming the popular thing to do, he exploded: "Brood of snakes! What do you think you're doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It's your life that must change, not your skin!"

Ok, now today we lit the candle of Peace on the Advent Wreath. Where was the logic of putting a Gospel reading like this on the week we are lighting candles of peace? Last week at our ministerium meeting, Bishop Gafjken was there. He commented that sometimes he has to scratch his head trying to find the good news in the Gospel.

Here's the thing. We need to really think about this word "peace". What do you think of when you hear the word "peace"?

_____. Silence, unity, contentment—I remember my mom would say after a hectic day, "What I want now is some peace and quiet."

Our Isaiah text paints quite a picture of peace. "*The wolf will romp with the lamb, the leopard sleep with the kid. Calf and lion will eat from the same trough, and a little child will tend them. Cow and bear will graze the same pasture, their calves and cubs grow up together, and the lion eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will crawl over rattlesnake dens,*

the toddler stick his hand down the hole of a serpent. Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill on my holy mountain. The whole earth will be brimming with knowing God-Alive, a living knowledge of God ocean-deep, ocean-wide.

Peace. Sounds wonderful. But I ask, “How does this perfect picture happen?” Well, I have a magnet on my refrigerator that says, “You can’t say you are for peace unless you are willing to disrupt it.” Throughout the history of Jesse’s branches these people disrupted peace, where people were content with a peace that wasn’t for everyone, in order to bring peace to the whole earth. It wasn’t always quiet. And Jesus?

Jesus didn’t come to earth to be peaceful. Jesus came to earth to bring everlasting peace to the whole earth. There is a big difference here. John the Baptist is his tirade to the Pharisees continues, *“I’m baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. The real action comes next: The main character in this drama—compared to him I’m a mere stagehand—will ignite the kingdom life within you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He’s going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He’ll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he’ll put out with the trash to be burned.”*

Jesus came to fight for peace for everyone and he took that fight to the cross. His very body is the nourishment we have that empowers us to take action and be Christ’s ambassadors of peace in the world. Action is not quiet.

Today this world needs ambassadors of peace. There is a current of fear and hate stirring in our society that is scary. What can we do about it? You heard John the Baptist. Through our baptism, we are ignited with the Holy Spirit. Through the power of the Spirit we are equipped to combat fear and hate with love. As we read from Matthew, John tells those Pharisees, *“That’s exactly what Jesus did. He didn’t make it easy for himself by avoiding people’s troubles, but waded right in and helped out. “I took on the troubles of the troubled,” is the way Scripture puts it.”*

Let’s think about where in our lives we see people who are troubled. How can we take action to help peace come? As the only Reconciling in Christ Lutheran church in Southern Indiana, we have taken a step towards combating hate and bigotry towards the LGBT folks. Is there more we can do? Definitely.

Just in the last few weeks, here in our community, not far from our Mission of Grace, Liberty Baptist Church was inflicted with a horrible racial attack. How can we be there for them and stand against this cancer of hate? How can we at Grace and Peace stand against hate and fear in any form in our community, our state, our nation, the world? I’m not asking these questions rhetorically. I’m asking for real ways Grace and Peace can take action here to help our sisters and brothers. Email me your ideas, or give them to me next Sunday. If you feel the nudge, volunteer to help me look at these ideas and let’s take action. It doesn’t have to be something big. It could be a simple card sent to Liberty Baptist. It could be in the conversations we have with people we meet in our daily lives, where we don’t stay quiet when we hear racial or homophobic, or talk against other religions, or any other hate language.

Last week, at the end our Spirit filled “Lights Before Christmas” service, Mike Musgrave challenged all of us to take action for peace. We all sang together “*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*” What does that look like?

Let me close with words from our Romans text. “*Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God...May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*”

Amen