

Column – Peace in this dark world

A single word which sums up the life and mission of Jesus Christ is ‘peace’. This word bookmarked His life. It was part of the announcement of the angels at his birth – “peace, goodwill toward men”.

Likewise, it was the first word out of Jesus’ mouth when He appeared in the Upper Room on that first Easter evening. In addition to being a common greeting of the day, this salutation spoke to the disciples’ failures at the time of His arrest in the garden. Remember the majority fled; Peter denied he even knew Jesus. Jesus’ greeting said they were still friends. Later in this conversation recorded in John 20, Jesus transfers His mission of peace and reconciliation to them . . . “As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

The Apostle Paul would go on to expand on this theme. In Ephesians 2:17, he writes: **“[Jesus Christ] came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.”** The thought here is that God’s goodwill and blessing – His peace – was embracing the whole world, the Jewish world, yes, but also the Gentile. All were being called into one family and fellowship. The old hostilities between tribes and groups were being taken out of the way. As commission by the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus, announcing peace was likewise Paul’s mission.

Of course, from all we read in the New Testament, announcing and living peace remains the mission of Jesus’ believing people. News of international conflict in our own day is certainly enough to bring about fear in even the most stouthearted; nevertheless, the news the Church proclaims, that the dark powers were defeated on the cross and that the resurrection Jesus

marks the beginning of God's new week of creation, remains good news.

Knowing God is in control and is working out a plan to put all wrongs to right brings both personal peace and prods Jesus' people to embrace His mission of peace.

Allow me to quote some words C.S. Lewis wrote in 1948 at a time when the atomic bomb was gripping men's hearts with fear. As you read them, why not substitute for 'atomic bomb' your own fears and angsts:

“The first action to be taken in our present crisis is to pull ourselves together.

“If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a

game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies, but they need not dominate our minds.”

To Lewis’ words, I would add a few of my own. Let God’s peace, the peace which comes through the cross and empty tomb, be the only thing to dominate your mind. Live it out in the world. Share it with every anxious soul you meet . . . in the post office, at the grocery store, with those at the gas pump, with those with whom you communicate online.

Jesus came announcing peace. Now that task has been passed to you and me. Take up the torch!

ALMIGHTY God, who showest to them that are in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; Grant unto all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion,

that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Collect for the Third Sunday after Easter)

The Rev. Victor H. Morgan is rector of St. Luke's Church, Blue Ridge.