

“Seeing the World through God’s Eyes of Peace”

Ephesians 1: 11-19

We continue our Advent journey this week by challenging ourselves to see the world through God’s eyes of peace. Now, I’m sure everyone is probably thinking, “We are talking about peace but nowhere in our text today was the word “peace” mentioned. The text talks about hope but that was last week’s theme. What does this Scripture have to do with seeing the world through God’s eyes of peace anyway?

Well, we will get to that part but first I want to back up and invite us to take a moment and reflect on just what does it mean for us as people of faith to see the world through God’s eyes. What does God see that we miss?

When I began developing this theme for our Advent journey, I had a vague idea of where we would be going but not completely. I knew the basic points that I wanted to lift up each week and understood that the invitation to see the world through God’s eyes was and is really an invitation to see things differently but never could I have imagined that it was also an invitation to see things more clearly.

Let me explain: What I love about this text is that it is really a prayer, Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. And in this prayer, he gives thanks for this community and their ministry but he does something else as well. He prays for them to become intelligent and discerning in knowing God. He prays that their eyes will become focused and clear. Paul prays that through this new vision and eyesight, the Ephesians will be able to see exactly what God is calling them to do.

I know this seems like a pretty weird prayer. Surely, Paul could have asked for other things in his prayers, things that they probably needed immediately, things like, oh, I don't know...good health or strength to continue their mission, things like healing and comfort for those who in need, things like an end to the persecution for their faith. Really Paul, the things you pray for this community are good eyesight and an ability to know God

What an odd sort of prayer...well, that was my thought until I realized that maybe Paul understood something that we tend to take for granted or even accept as the norm. Paul understood that we as people of faith need to see exactly what God is calling us to do so that we can and will go out and do it. I know this doesn't seem like the biggest theological insight of the century or anything but just think about it.

How many times have we asked for God to give us sign so that we would know what we are supposed to do in certain situations? We pray and we pray, God just give us a sign. And then we are disappointed or frustrated when we don't get our received sign.

I've wondered many times why we do this as people of faith. I think we get on some level that God is not some wish-granter or some great being that is here to serve and see to all our whims. So I think the real reason we ask for these signs from God is because we know and have experienced that life is not at all focused or clear. We understand and have experienced that no matter what the situation is, life is not always black or white but rather majority of the time life is grey and ambiguous. Our experiences have taught us that life tends to be made up of a lot of blurry lines or hazy clouds of should have, could have moments. And I think we can all agree that life certainly doesn't come with a roadmap or any instructions.

No, I think the real reason we ask for signs from God is because we know, at all levels life is not clear. And we hope that by asking for signs, maybe just maybe, through these signs, when it comes to us being the people of God here on earth, we will know we are doing the right thing in the moment. We will know and see clearly just what God is exactly calling us to do here on earth.

That is what Paul's prayer is really about. He just goes about asking for in a different way. Through his prayer, Paul tries to give the Ephesians the tools and the confidence to always know, and to always see what God is calling them to do as the people of God here on earth. What we miss and what Paul understands that this knowing of our calling doesn't and won't come from signs but rather it comes from the knowing and our experiencing God in our lives. So when he prays this odd little prayer for the Ephesians, what he is really praying for is for them to stop looking for signs and start being the sign of God's Kingdom. Paul wants them to start beginning to see the world through God's eyes. Because Paul knows when they begin to do this, they will see exactly what God is calling them to do in every situation which, they will come to discover, is to simply always, always love as God has loved us, no, ifs, ands, or buts.

Paul wants them to stop looking for signs and wants them to be the sign for all of God's creation. Paul knows that God has called this group to be a sign of God's Kingdom here on earth for all of God's people, a sign that shows the world that God is actively working in this world, that God has never left them alone, a sign that says God's Kingdom is here, a kingdom of love, a kingdom of grace, a kingdom of justice and more importantly a kingdom of peace. And this peace is not just about there being a lack of conflict in this world.

No this peace is about the understanding that all creation is in a state of wholeness and unity, the understanding that all creation is living the life God intended for it. No this peace has its foundations in the understanding that all creation is redeemed, restored and renewed. This peace that I am talking about, that we are all hoping for to come to our world is God's true Shalom.

Now, I know that for some, this type of peace seems like a crazy unrealistic dream but when we, like the Ephesians, accept the invitation to see the world through God's eyes of peace, we begin to realize that this understanding of God's true shalom can be and should be the reality for all of God's children here on earth. When we see the world through God's eyes of peace, we begin to see clearly, that yes, the lion can and will lie down with the lamb, that war and conflict can and will cease, and, that, swords and spears will be beat into shovels and plowshares.

By seeing the world through God's eyes of peace, We begin to see clearly that the Kingdom of God is all around us, just waiting for us to grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life that God has for each and every one of God's children.

When we see the world through God's eyes of peace, we begin to see so many possibilities, possibilities will transform lives and bring healing and wholeness to all of God's creation.

You see, I honestly don't think God intended God's creation to be the way it is today. In the beginning, God pronounced it good but somewhere along the way, humankind got involved and we got side-tracked. Somewhere along the way, Humankind decided that money would be what guided our decisions. Somewhere along the way, Humankind decided that power and might should be what ruled our world. Somewhere along the way, Humankind decided that "Looking out for number one" should be our motto. Somewhere along the way, we as humankind forgot to see the world through God's eyes of peace.

And now is the time, we refocus our vision. Now is the time we reclaim the possibilities of healing and wholeness for all of God's children. Now is the time we decide to keep the vision of God's peaceable kingdom always in front of us, to keep the vision of God's peaceable kingdom always guiding us, to keep the vision of God's peaceable kingdom always as our focus. Because if we as people of faith can't keep, or won't keep this vision, this hope, this wonderful reality of peace in our world alive and thriving in our world, how can this world, whose vision is so cloudy from war, violence and hate, how can this world which is so broken, which is crying out for good news, how can this world ever believe that God's peaceable kingdom can and will be a reality someday, especially if we as people of faith continue to refuse to see what God has called us to do, if we continue to refuse to grasp the immensity of this glorious kingdom life that God planned for all of God's

creation. How can this world ever see itself through God's eyes of peace if we as people of faith continue to refuse to do so ourselves?

Now is the time to stop asking for signs from God. Now is the time to start being the sign from God, a sign of peace, a sign of hope, a sign of grace, a sign of God's Kingdom for all of God's children.

I will tell you that I have been pretty quiet lately about the events in our nation lately. Partly because I don't know what it is like to experience such brokenness in the system simply because of my background and yes, because of the privileges afforded to me because of that background. I have also kept silent because it has all been too overwhelming for me as a person of faith and my heart has simply cried out to God, "How Long, O Lord until your justice rolls down like water?"

Although I have kept quiet, I realized that now is the time for me to speak, not by choosing sides but by sharing with everyone an experience that has helped me gain new insight into what it means for us as people of faith to see the world through God's eyes of peace.

Over Thanksgiving holiday, one of our friends from seminary called us and shared that before the holiday, he went to Ferguson. Immediately, when he told me

this, my first reaction was are you crazy? You have a wife. You have two small kids. Didn't you think about them before you decided to go?

And he said, it was because of them, his two small children, that he felt convicted to go. He wanted to show his children that God was still at work in the middle of all that brokenness and hurt in Ferguson.

Our friend shared that he met up with a few clergy while in Ferguson and it was a humbling sight. Once again, my first reaction was "What were you trying to do, get some good publicity for the wider Church? To show the wider culture that we can get behind our ivory walls? Were you going as some sanctimonious gesture as a white male?"

Our friend responded that it was humbling because there wasn't much of a clergy presence in Ferguson. Once again, the Church had missed another opportunity to invite the world to experience the Kingdom of God

Our friend continued by saying that the few clergy that were there formed a line between the protestors and the police officers, to show that they had not picked a side in the brokenness but also to show that there was another way, God's way, and that way is a way of grace, a way of peace, a way of hope. They formed a line between the hurt and the hatred to show that there is another way, way that invites

all of God's children to experience the life God intended all humanity to live in the first place, which is a life that has been made whole, redeemed and restored.

As, my friend continued sharing his story, I realized that is exactly what it means for us as people of faith to see the world through God's eyes of peace. Because when we do just that, We are able to see past the brokenness, see past the hurt, see past the hatred and see, truly see the potential and the possibility of God's peaceable Kingdom in our midst. Yes, there needs to be conversations. Yes, there needs to be healing. I am not ignoring the process. But all of that can happen, if and when we as people of faith begin to see the world through eyes of God's peace, when we stop asking for signs and start being the signs of God's peace in our community, in our nation and in our world.

As people of faith, we know what we are called to do. We are called to love as God loves. We are called to be signs of God's peace. We are called to show this world that there is another way.

We are called to see things through God's eyes which allows us to see things more clearly. When God's peaceable Kingdom is our focus, We see the image of God in each and every person. We see everyone we meet as made and created in the image of God. When we see the world through God's eyes, our vision as people of faith becomes clearer and more focused. When we see the world through

God's eyes, we are able to see the Kingdom of God all around us. And soon, very soon, it becomes the only thing that we are able to see.

Soon, very soon, it becomes the only thing we want to see.

May we always see our world through God's eyes of peace. Amen.