

“Seeking Peace”

Psalm 122

We continue our journey through Lent and our journey to the cross, all the while seeking the Messiah. And again today on our journey, we have a text that is not a typical Lenten text. Actually, it is more of an Advent text. No, I haven't gotten my seasons mixed up due to lack of sleep or anything. I chose this text because it is a text that has been used and is usually said by people on a pilgrimage. This text was sung by people making their way, making journeys to Jerusalem to offer thanks to God and to worship God with all their heart, mind and soul. Just like we are doing with each coming step, just like we are doing as fellow travelers on the road, on the journey to Jerusalem. We are making our way to the place where we will meet and see the Messiah, to the place where we find peace, to the place where we will find wholeness and healing.

However, the biggest difference between the pilgrims of old and us modern-day travelers is the emotions behind our songs. We can tell that Psalm 122 is a song of anticipation, a song of preparation, a song of celebration, a song of peace. But when the people sang it on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, it was also a song of joy.

Not exactly the emotion that we have or share on our Lenten journey. When we take our steps on our way to Jerusalem, sure there is anticipation and preparation, but there is also a sense of dread, because we know what awaits us in Jerusalem, we know what awaits our Lord in Jerusalem, we know what awaits the one we call Messiah in Jerusalem. But we make the journey anyway, just like the travelers of old.

I guess if we are really honest with ourselves we aren't that much different from the people who made the pilgrimage of old to Jerusalem. I'm sure that the travelers old also experienced a sense of dread as they began their journey as well because they knew that the city of Jerusalem had never been a city of peace. They had experienced the violence, the frustration, the anger, and yes sometimes the wars that surrounded the city of Jerusalem. It is just that when the travelers of old started out on their journeys to Jerusalem, they remembered that they were not necessarily just going to the city but they were being invited to go and to know the dwelling place of God.

They understood that the Jerusalem in their song is not necessarily just a city, but that it represented the promise of God's presence on earth, it represented the promise of God's presence on earth, it represented the promise of God's promised one coming and offering wholeness and healing to all of God's people.

When they travelers of old sang this song, they were making a commitment to live in God's rule and recognition of God's reign here on earth.

And that is why their song is a song of joy and a song of peace. The people on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem understood that they were really making their way to a place beyond space and time, to God's kingdom here on earth where all will live in peace.

And this was good news for people who had not known peace for thousands of years and it continues to be good news for people who still have not experienced true peace in thousands of years. The peace that the travelers sing about is not just a peace that comes from an absence of hostility, not just a peace that comes from an absence of violence, not just a peace that comes from an absence of war. Their song was a cry, a plea, an expression of hope for true authentic peace that can only be found when we open our hearts and minds up to God and truly live in the presence of God's holy presence, peace that comes when all live together, peace that comes with all "take seriously our mutual responsibility to and for each other, peace that comes when all members see that the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, the lost welcomed, the hurting comforted, the sorrowful healed, peace that comes when all become the people that God created them to be.

That is why the travelers of old sing with joy on their journey to Jerusalem and invite us to do the same. They hold onto to the hope that maybe this year will

be different. They hold onto the promise given to them by God that God will send them a Messiah who will bring peace to Jerusalem once more. They hold onto the understanding that even as they pray for peace, they can still celebrate because the peace they know because they understand the Lord is here with them on their journeys of life.

When we hear the pilgrims' song of Psalm 122, we realize that the words and phrases are inviting us to enter, not just the gates of Jerusalem, but to enter into a new world, a world where we can and should let ourselves be open to God's kingdom here on earth and all the possibilities that holds for God's people.

That's the good news for us as we continue our journey to Jerusalem. We are invited to hold onto the hope that maybe this year our journey will be different. Maybe this year, we will grow and deepen our relationship with God. Maybe this year we will experience God's grace in a new way. Maybe this year, there will be peace when we enter the gates of Jerusalem. Maybe this year, we will find and embrace fully our Messiah, Jesus Christ. Maybe this year is the year where God's Kingdom is realized here on earth and there will be peace for all of God's children.

That is why we continue make the journey to Jerusalem each and every year, because with each passing step, we commit and re-commit ourselves to live under God's rule. We commit and re-commit ourselves to live in the presence of God always. We commit and re-commit ourselves to strive for peace and justice for all

of God's children. We commit and re-commit ourselves to hold onto the hope that one day God's Kingdom will be realized here on earth.

With each passing step on our journey to Jerusalem, we understand that these hopes, these visions of peace, these very basic beliefs are not wishful thinking but are actually the promises that God has given to us as God's beloveds.

So each year, we continue our journey to Jerusalem, hoping that this year will be different, that maybe we will meet the Messiah and experience the true peace of God, that maybe we will experience God's reign here on earth and find healing and wholeness, maybe this year, our journey to Jerusalem will be different.

Because we know that through the gift of God's Son, we already have the promise of eternal life. We know that through the life, death, and resurrection of our Messiah, Jesus Christ, we have already been invited to experience God's grace and God's mercy. We know that through the one we once proclaimed Emmanuel, God with us, has now become and forever will be known to us as "the Lord is here" and that same Emmanuel God, that same one known as "the Lord is here", that same loving, merciful and peace-filled God is on our journeys of faith and in our lives always.

We know that the one we celebrate as our Messiah has already redeemed us through the gift of his love and more importantly the gift of his peace, true,

authentic peace where all are satisfied, where all are welcomed, where all named and claimed as God's very own.

Like the travelers of old, when we sing the words and phrases of Psalm 122, there is anticipation, there is preparation, there is celebration and there is the hope for peace, but more importantly, there is joy because we have met and embraced the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Savior, because we know and have experienced the peace of God in our lives, because we know and truly believe that one day, God's Kingdom will come for all of God's children.

We sing for joy on our journey to Jerusalem, hoping, knowing that maybe this year will be different. Maybe this year, there will be peace for all of God's children. Maybe this year, when we meet the Messiah, we will fully understand what he meant when he said and invited all of us to be a part of his peaceable kingdom, where the lion will lay down with the lamb, where swords are beat into plow shares, where a little child will lead them.

Maybe this year, when we enter the gates of Jerusalem, there will be peace.

That is our hope. That is our belief. That is what helps us make the journey to Jerusalem every year. Maybe this year, it will be different.

Only time can tell...but in the meantime

May we continue to seek the Messiah who came to bring us the peace of God for all of God's children. Amen.