

Sermon Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Remembrance Day Service

Our responsive reading from the Beatitudes states;

**"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."**

I have been wondering, especially on a day like today when we are thinking about next Friday and Remembrance Day, what is peace? What does it mean to work towards peace? I think that these are really important questions that we are challenged to look at as Christians.

So what is peace? What do you think peace is?

**I also did some looking into peace and I came across a website called "Peace Revolution" and the author listed some attributes of peace:**

**"Peace is more than just the absence of war and violence**

**Peace is not the absence of conflict – but the ability to manage conflict constructively, as an important opportunity for change and increased understanding**

**Peace is a commitment to understanding, celebrating and learning from difference**

**Peace is a commitment not to harm, but also to nurture, all individuals."**

I agree that peace is much more than just the absence of war or conflict. I believe that peace goes much deeper. I wonder if it actually goes to the heart of what we believe. If we look at what the reading this morning says if we are peacemakers, we will be the children of God. To be children of God we must then follow God.

The question that brings up for me is, what does it mean to follow God?

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark both tell us that the greatest commandment, and I will paraphrase a bit here, is to love God with all of one's heart, soul, and mind and to love one's neighbour as oneself. When we think about the idea of love most of us will automatically think of the romantic type of love, or this deep emotional connection to another and although that might be a form of love. I wonder if that is what Jesus was talking about in these Gospel stories.

Jesus was not talking about this romantic type of love that we immediately think about, Jesus was speaking of something else. In first century Judah, to love one's family meant one's family would become a priority in their life. The relationship would become a priority in one's life. I was reading about the idea of first century love on the Bible.org website and the author had some interesting reflections on

love, "A little girl stayed for dinner at the home of her first grade friend. The vegetable was buttered broccoli and the mother asked if she liked it. The child politely replied, "Oh, yes, I love it!" But when the broccoli was passed she declined to take any. The hostess said, "I thought you said you loved broccoli." The girl replied sweetly, "Oh, yes ma'am, I do, but not enough to eat it."

Do you love your fellow Christians in this church? "Oh, yes," you say, "Jesus commanded us to love one another. I love God's people!" Well, then, why are you and another not on speaking terms? "Him? He ripped me off in a business deal. And he calls himself a Christian!"

Why are there hard feelings between you and that friend over there? "Her? She's a gossip. Do you know what she said about me behind my back? God knows that I've tried to be nice to her, but there has to be a limit on how much you do for someone like her."

Yes, we love broccoli, but not enough to eat it. We love the brethren, but not enough to work out our differences.

**John O'Keefe, who writes a blog on Patheos. com, describes the current state of the world in the following way, "As I look around my world, I see the evil that surrounds us. I see the anger so many people hold towards those they disagree with; I see the hurt they feel from others; I see the life pains which cause them to close off to the world around them; I see the insults that crush the spirits of many; I see the marginalization that push people to the sidelines of life. In my heart, I feel the pain, the hurts, the insults, the marginalization of others. I believe we need to be better. We should not address anger with anger; we should not address hurt with hurt; we should not address pain with pain; we should not address insults with insults; we should not address our feelings of being marginalized by marginalizing others. We should address anger, pains, hurts, insults, and marginalization with goodness. We should be the expression of goodness; we should be the voice of goodness. Our lives should a model of doing good. You may be the only goodness people see, or experience.**

If I think about this idea of what Jesus meant about love I come to realize that it is really about what are our priorities in life. If we are to love God, that means that we are being called to make God a priority in our lives. God becomes the centre of who we see that we are, a beloved creation of God, and it we come to understand that our actions in the world need to reflect that God is a priority in our lives. Secondly if we are called to love one another as ourselves that means that others

become just as much a priority as we do. No longer can we marginalize others, no longer can we hate others, or think that others are less than we are, or that we are more important than others. If we love others as ourselves we come to realize that we are all equally important in the world.

What does this have to do with peace? I believe that if we truly that each of us is just as important as another, it makes it much easier to understand that differences are not something that we need to be afraid of, differences can no longer become a threat. If we all, not just us but the world, understood that difference is not bad, but rather it just is, we could all come to see others as unique expressions of God's love.

We tend to be afraid of differences, we tend to think of those who are different as "others," which can lead us to think of them as being not as worthy, leading to inequality and injustice in the world.

If peace was an understanding that difference was something that was to be embraced and worked within, then maybe peace could come into the world.

As Christians we are called to be bringers of this type of peace. **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."** **"Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me."** And so on this day when we recognize Remembrance Day, let us commit ourselves to bring peace and love into the world, so that we can truly say, "Never Again." Peace be with you. Amen.