

## Peacemakers

Today, as we remember our soldiers and our armed forces – let us remember that we should be thinking about world peace - that is what the Bible ultimately points to, when God's Kingdom comes upon earth.

In the Old Testament, 700 hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah has a wonderful vision of world peace,

*“He will judge between the nations  
and will settle disputes for many peoples.  
They will beat their swords into ploughshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.”*

But how is this world peace to be achieved?

In the view of Isaiah,  
By the coming of a special servant, 9v6/7  
*“to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup> Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.”*

This is the hope of all Christians. Because we see in Christ, God's way of reconciliation and World peace.

Jesus said, *“Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God.”*

General Douglas MacArthur, one of America's finest Generals wrote.

“The soldier above all others prays for peace, for it is the soldier who must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war”.

It's a great reminder to us to pray for peace but not only to pray but to be peacemakers.

The reality is peace can be achieved, if we are all willing to work at it.

So how can peace in this world be achieved?

Let's consider the one who was called the Prince of Peace.

He lets us know.

V 10 “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love.”

This is the secret of Christian discipleship, to remain in Christ's love. This is the way to peace.

Of course, there is context to these words of Jesus and they are part of Jesus' metaphor of the vine and the branches, and he uses this analogy to show us how as Christians we can be fruitful.

The vine is Christ, the branches are his believers, and God is the gardener who prunes and who tends the vine.

This is a powerful analogy for discipleship and it encourages us young and old to abide in Christ. He is calling his disciples to an intimate living fellowship with him, for this is the way to friendship with his Father and the way to peace.

True peace begins when we know that God has made peace with us.

For a vine to grow successfully, it needs the right soil.

This reminds us that our roots should be planted in God's grace and mercy.

For us to grow strong as Christians, it is good for us to know God's mercy and love in our lives.

For a vine to grow strong, it also needs severe pruning. It has two types of branches one that bears fruit and one that doesn't and so the task of the gardener is to identify the branches that are not bearing fruit and to prune drastically, so that they will not drain the plant's strength.

So how do we stay fruitful? By staying close to Jesus.

How do we become peace makers? By daily becoming like Jesus.

Making time and space each day for a quiet time with God, a time of devotion. This builds our relationship with him.

By doing this regularly we are remaining on the vine, coming to church is an opportunity to stay close to Christ, but it needs more than an hour a week, it needs commitment each day.

On this day of Remembrance, when we count the cost of war, we are called to be peacemakers, blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. In this often-hostile world, Christians are the people who need to let their light shine brightest and be seen to be God's peacemakers and to work with God to bring his peace into this restless world.

Let us sing, 527, "Lord make us servants of your peace."

### **Joy, love and peace.**

Historically, the Menin Gate of Ypres was simply a crossing point over the moat and through the ramparts of the old town fortifications, on the road to the nearby town of Menin. It had a special significance for the troops though: it was from this spot that thousands of soldiers set off for the part of the Front called the Ypres Salient – many destined never to return.

This became the chosen site for one of the grandest and most haunting memorials of the Great War. The new Menin Gate was built in the form of a Roman triumphal arch. Since 1928, buglers from the Last Post Association have been playing the Last Post in this very spot every night at 8 p.m., regardless of the number of attendants or weather conditions.

The vast, white, Portland-stone walls of the Menin Gate are engraved with the names of nearly 55,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers lost on the field of battle but with no known graves; a son, a father, a brother. In fact the walls of the Menin Gate were not big enough: a further 34,957 names of the

last and untraced are inscribed on the walls of Tyne Cot Cemetery to the east of Ypres.

Another timely reminder of the horrors of war and the urgent need for peace.

Turning again to our passage, we discover that the one who abides in Christ will be blessed with fruit, spiritual fruit.

The Apostle Paul speaks of this fruit and he names three fruits which those who abide in Christ will have.

Love, Joy and Peace – the very opposite of war.

**Abiding in Christ brings us love.**

Jesus commands us to love. It's not an encouragement but a command! This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.

Love is at the heart of being a disciple of Jesus. For it was love that motivated Jesus to go to the cross. In this passage he said, *“No one can show greater love, than to lay down his life for his friends.”* This is the ultimate sacrifice and Jesus is speaking about his own death. He was willing to sacrifice his life for the sin of the World.

On this day as we remember sacrifice and the cost of war, we say thank you, to all who have laid down their lives to bring about peace.

But in the midst of it all, we remember the one who showed the ultimate love for us and that's why He can say with authority to us, *“My command is this, Love each other as I have loved you.”*

As a Christian to love is not an option, it's a command. It's who we are and whose we serve.

Secondly, when we abide in Christ we will be filled with Joy.

In our passage, Jesus speaks of his joy being in us, so that our joy may be complete.

Joy is not found in material things, yes, material things can make us happy, for a short time, but Christian Joy is something much deeper.

It is discovered in our relationship with God. Through faith in Christ, his Spirit lives in us.

Hardship and suffering did not steal the Apostle Paul's joy because he was not looking to his circumstances for comfort, peace, and fulfilment—he was looking to Christ and he knew that Jesus was in Him.!

Throughout his letter, Paul's message is clear: *If I suffer, it is for Christ! If I am satisfied, it is because of Christ! Whatever comes my way, I will fix my eyes upon my Saviour and face it with joyful endurance and eternal thankfulness.*

That's great news because Joy can't be bought but Joy is a gift from God.

It is a gift coming from our relationship with Jesus.

Paul knew what it was to experience God's love in his life. He was released from his bitterness and his hostility towards Christians because God broke into his life and that brought great Joy to him.

Joy is found in worship.

The psalmist wrote, *I was full of joy, when I went to the house of the Lord.* There is no doubt that worshipping God brings us deep joy.

### **Another mark of a Christian is Peace.**

We come back to peace, for when we abide in Christ and our lives are filled with his love and his joy, then the result is peace.

Jesus calls his disciples friends. *You are my friends, if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants but I call you friends!*

When we are friends, we live in peace and harmony. The wall of division has been smashed down and we are on an equal footing. Is there any higher privilege for us than to be called friends of God?

So we are called to abide in Christ and from that relationship we are peacemakers who bring God's peace into this world.

**So, let us worship God together as we sing, 710 "I have a dream..."**