

“Role Modelling Jesus’ Peace”

A sermon shared with the congregation of St. Andrew’s United Church
on November 11, 2018 - Remembrance Day Sunday

Mark 12:38-44

by Rev. Dave Le Grand

The images on the right side of the screen you see are of the Children’s Peace Monument. It was built in honour of Sadako Sasaki, who died of radiation poisoning caused by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan during World War II.

Here in North America we are insulated from war, for most part. It seems alien to us, war. Stories that Dr. Mount chronicles of people who went to war probably seem like fiction to our children.

The other image you see on the screen in front of you is a bronze statue in the United Nations garden entitled *Let Us Beat Swords into Ploughshares*, sculpted by Evgeniy Vuchetich. It depicts the figure of a man hammering a sword into the shape of a ploughshare – it’s based on a vision of the prophet Isaiah of peace found on God’s holy mountain. A vision of an end to war.

Don’t we yearn for more leaders in our world with that vision. But it seems so many in positions of great power wave their swords, and some use and abuse their power rather than using authority to make this world better.

This week’s Gospel reading from Mark presents us with a shocking contrast that Jesus describes. Such blunt honesty sets him on the path to death, speaking truth to power, really. He draws his followers’ attention to the pompous Scribes.

Now it is easy to target the Jewish religious leaders, but it needs to be said that in Jesus’ time as today, there are many elites – leaders of all sorts like these scribes. People who have some power, authority, and who like the scribes, probably feel they are upholding laws, being honorable. [Rodger Y. Nishioka. *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary— Year B, Volume 4: Season After Pentecost 2*]

Bible Scholar Walter Wink used the apostle Paul’s language to describe systems that block God’s life-giving work; Paul used the term ***principalities and powers***. I think that principalities and powers are as alive and well today. I think that sometimes we are ***a part of systems*** that celebrate wealth, that anoint celebrity, while at the same time these systems that we are sometimes a part of, they place burden on the poor, they suppress the voiceless, and stigmatize the most vulnerable. It is easy to point fingers at those scribes, but maybe they are US.

Contrasted with the scribes is the widow. Let us not put her on a pedestal. She too can be us. She presents all of who she is in that moment, fully committing herself. We get off easy if we objectify the widow and her mite. Instead, we can see her as the model for giving more than money, but also giving of ourselves to God. How can we take the grace and hope we experience from God and make it live in our lives in ways that not only sustain us, but model for others the enormous power of offering all of who we are to the rest of creation?” [Emilie M. Townes. *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary— Year B, Volume 4: Season After Pentecost 2*]

Instead of pointing fingers at our leaders who lack character, who lack vision, who abuse power and authority, we can role model peace through giving fully of ourselves as that widow gave fully of herself, humbly, lovingly, faithfully.