

## **“Peace”**

A sermon shared with the congregation of St. Andrew’s United Church  
via YouTube Worship on April 19, 2020  
by Rev. Catherine Somerville

Alone in a room where thoughts are born in the stillness. Light so fragile that it seems as if it too is holding its very breath. Shadows encroaching after a long day. The night stretches ahead.... And they have gathered to wait. Not sure for what, or for whom. Waiting has become their practice this last, long week. Each day, they come together, take some food, engage in small talk. And they wait. But then, waiting interrupted. A presence? A reminder? A memory? Could it be him? “Peace” he says. “Peace be to you.”

Meaning so much more than “May you be saved from trouble.” It means “May God give you every good thing.” Blessing and benediction. Good news. The best news of all. The words they need to begin again.

Even Thomas, late to the game. “Peace be to you, Thomas. May God give you every good thing.” Enough for him to begin again.

In this waiting time in which we find ourselves wrapped, some of us will say, trapped .... we too find that we are waiting. Waiting for the next numbers and statistics to come out. Waiting for reprieve. Waiting and wanting so badly to begin again.

So, what might be a practice we can adopt to help us through the waiting time? The gospel narrative Brennan read to us gives us a good hint. We can pray for peace.

Maybe it looks like this: (American Sign Language)

Right palm placed on left palm, then turn hands over so that the left palm is on top,  
then push both palms down....

We know all too well, that the world gives peace and takes it away so easily. Since 1919, the nations of Europe have signed more than 200 treaties of peace. Each treaty, simply another scrap of paper, was broken more easily than it was consummated.

From the year 1500-- Before the Christian Era-- to 1860, more than 8,000 treaties of peace, each meant to remain in force forever, were concluded. The average time they remained in force was less than two years.

Jesus offers a much different kind of peace than a paper treaty. His is a lasting peace. One that cannot be ripped up as easily as it was constructed.

“Peace be to you. May God give you every good thing.”

Right palm placed on left palm, then turn hands over so that the left palm is on top,  
then push both palms down....

We pray for peace for ourselves.... Give us the patience we need. “God, make me an instrument of your peace.”

We pray for the peace of our community. Open our hearts with invitations to live generously. “where there is hatred, let me sow love.”

We pray for the peace of essential workers, those who are sick, those who are lost. Be their strength, be their hope. “where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope.”

We pray for peace between nations, so that we realize we are one family, all in this together. Teach us that love’s power is as wide as the ocean. “where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.”

(Right palm placed on left palm, then turn hands over so that the left palm is on top, then push both palms down....)

What Thomas, and all disciples need, is the assurance that the one from whom they hear the word of peace, is the one who calls them, calls us, to be witnesses. “As God has sent me, so I am sending you. Tell the world that despite all the harm and hurt we see each day, God’s vision is bigger than that. God’s compassion and care are made known to the end of the age. So, peace be to you. May God give you every good thing. May this be our prayer.”

(Right palm placed on left palm, then turn hands over so that the left palm is on top, then push both palms down....)

Amen.