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## *Peace: A Sense of Urgency Will Prevail*

Mikell Chapel  
The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost  
Proper 11  
July 19, 2009  
Ephesians 2:11-22  
Gospel: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56  
7:45 and 9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

We have been given everything that we need to live the Christian life. God expects us to connect with others. In order to live a Christian life without anxiety, consistent and uninterrupted inner peace becomes the goal. The rhetorical question becomes; "Are you at peace?"

Peace is made available by the example of the life of Christ to everyone. At times, this example of living seems unbelievable in attaining. This letter written to the Ephesians declares that: "Peace is made available by Christ to everyone."

Those who lived during that time heard those words from Paul and considered the possibility of what that may be like. That is, being at peace. The crowds around Jesus were filled with a sense of urgency and opportunity. This urgency was conveyed on many levels.

Urgency today is translated around any event that is deemed worthy. When there is energy in the air, when there is anticipation all around, the environment comes alive with a connectedness. There is conversation that points to what is about to happen. The unity of the anticipation is where the energy comes from. It does not say that all who are anticipating are waiting for the same outcome.

When there is a sense of urgency, usually the enthusiasm centers on an event. The event will have those who are anticipating not necessarily having the same goal in mind. The energy, the interest, the level of probability gains momentum and interaction is sought after by those who are motivated to reach their goal.

The challenge to reach the goal sometimes becomes the primary focus. When this occurs, the goal will sometimes become secondary. The primary focus is often the attention gaining momentum event regardless of the subject matter.

The crowds invariably reflect a common interest. Crowds are not always in public view.

Because of the mood of the crowds gathered, money will be exchanged by those who have a heart for giving to others who are in need. Words of persuasion will be spoken to others who have influence in the community and still others will hear the words of influence and rally for the same cause. Those who are of like mind and those who are in opposing position will make their points and will speak with abandon on why they are in compliance or not. The anticipation invites and offers an opportunity to make a difference.

Thus was the case with those who were seeking peace and healing when Paul spent three years of his life at Ephesus.

When the crowds were looking for this man who they called a miracle worker, those who were really interested and those who were vested would go ahead of him from village to village. They would travel on those dusty roads with their garments blowing in the wind. While they were traveling and seeking a place of peace, Herod of Antipas, David and others, who were well-known, were living their lives high above the crowds.

Herod of Antipas in his summer place that stood on the peak of the mountains and his palace faced the Sea of Galilee. This ambitious place of architecture and design even then awed those who were invited. One could see for miles around in including looking down into the valley.

The ever present dust of the mountains was in distinct contrast with the olive tree groves and orchards of palm trees and the plentiful oasis of grassy knolls were obvious. These ran parallel to the mountainous desert. The people encountered this environment.

Many were walking in the same direction because they wanted to see and hear and experience the results of what they had heard about.

Not only was the man called a miracle worker, he was also called a peacemaker. He could bring about peace and calm with just the raising of his hand. The disciples could attest to this.

We live in drastically different times today. This does not imply that we do not have faith in God. What the climate of today dictates is that in seeking, regaining and retaining the ever present desire to be at peace, all sorts of measures are adhered to.

The walls of defense are defined and redefined.

We, as citizens of this country and carriers of the faith in which we have been baptized are ever seeking and claiming the grace of our Lord.

The community at Ephesus wanted peace in the midst of their hostilities toward one another. Therefore they brought friends to seek out this man called Jesus. This Son of God. They told their neighbors and the neighbors decided to join the others just to see what was in this for them.

You see, the neighbors wanted peace as well. The walls of protection and division that had been built were not working like they use to. The hostilities amongst the groups were becoming more apparent. Those who had faith and believed in what they had heard and even experienced understood what it meant to be a part of the community of seekers.

Oftentimes the walls of protection and division encased voices who were seeking the same peace, especially from an inward perspective.

The Jews and the Gentiles were in opposite camps when it came to seeking peace.

At times peace seems indescribable. And even though "this place of peace" seems "hard to pin down," we as citizens, we as faith subscribers look for the place to stand in the midst of the potential walls that divide us and pull us away from community.

The wall of division exist between countries, and in some instances rightfully so. These walls of division exist on levels of living and working and praying and being that are far too numerous to count this morning. However, in the midst of the walls of division that we all encounter in our daily living, there is a place that is called a place of peace that is there through the uniting of the body of Christ for all who desire this symmetry.

In the early church during the days of Paul, Paul's anguish over the fate of fellow Jews who did not accept Jesus as messiah was very apparent. "Paul concluded that Jewish disbelief had opened the way for non-Jews."

Through Christ, the barriers between people who were on opposing sides of the covenant were brought together. Christ

proclaimed peace to all of God's people and the walls of hostility, the barriers of separation were diminished. Everyone who had a stake in seeking peace recognized and accepted the very present fact of having access to God.

Having access to God is a comforting way of living. The people of Israel and the people of this world today can have peace. In the desire to live in the freedom of God's love, the driving force which is permeated through and through by the Holy Spirit is foundational.

It is the center of seeking, gaining and having peace within.

If faith centered in Christ is not first and foremost, the walls of division become terminal.

The gospel of Mark reminds us of the hope. Those who were following him wanted to be able to touch the hem of his garment. They were weary. Not always, but they would become worn and recognize fatigue within themselves from the day to day living.

Yes, his disciples were weary. God as the good shepherd recognized that they, the disciples, needed refreshment and renewal. He told them to "come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile".

Come to my table and have supper with me. We are invited to come to the table. It will bring refreshment and renewal.

Jews and Christians can and do have hope for the future. "'From creation and revelation comes our faith that God has not and will not abandon us or the world, that the promised redemption is surely yet to come." David Novak, Jewish Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification (Oxford university Press, 1989.) 156.

When hope is divided the appeal of potential idols who one thinks can deliver hope is often found not to be able to deliver. They cannot deliver. Those who have faith and trust in the future through God, peace for them becomes the centerpiece.

The embrace of inner peace is ever present. How do we know this?

When we reach to connect with the presence of the almighty, a sense of calm prevails. This calm and rest prevails in the midst of the divisions and hostility. The walls of hostility are eventually crumbled when peace is sought.

It takes sometimes scores of years. Sometimes one generation hands the mantle over to the next. Through it all faith in God continues to sustain us and the face of reconciliation will prevail. The peace of empires is not true peace. True peace is found in the prevailing presence of God. Always.

"Jesus came to lower the barrier that had existed between Gentiles and Jews, and to "reconcile both groups to God in one body through the Cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it."

-New Proclamation, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2009.

God is a loving benefactor offering all people a stake in salvation.

Amen.

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