

CAMP MENNOSCAH 9/25/22

WELCOME

Welcome to our service here in the beauty of nature out at camp.

Somehow it seems that we all are more relaxed and come more alive when we are at camp. It is wonderful to be able to worship together this morning in the beautiful outside air, enjoying the cool breeze.

We are continuing the theme of peace from this past Sunday. We'll also have some more peace-themed songs.

A big thanks to people participating in the worship service with readings as well as music; especially Kevin and Eric.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/SHARING

GREETING FROM TAMMY DUNAVEL-UNRUH, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AT THE CAMP

CALL TO WORSHIP

(from the Mennonite Central Committee's Peace Sunday Worship Resources)

O God, you made us in your image and likeness,
But we are frail and distracted from your unfailing love.
Your divine assurance empowers us to overcome evil.

Forgive us our sins and show us your mercy.

You conquered damnation and renewed the earth,
your life-giving spirit transforms our weakness,
and you bless us with peace.

Forgive us our sins and show us your mercy.

You give us a peace which you alone can give,
a peace that encompasses love, compassion, mercy and self-giving.
We are yours in justice seeking, in peacemaking and in right
relationship with you, creation and others.

Bless us with the peace which you alone give.

Transform our hearts and attitudes toward each other.
May we respect our differences and constantly thank you
for the diversity.
You made all things good and beautiful; may your will be done.

Renew us and fill us with your presence.

Bring peace to our chaotic world.
We offer you our obedience,
and submit ourselves to you in all things.

Reconcile all things to yourself.

INVOCATION

FIRST SET OF SONGS

FIRST SCRIPTURE READINGS —AMOS 5:18-24, PSALM 120

PASTORAL PRAYER — PASTOR LOIS

Loving God, we confess and lament how little there is in our lives that actually reflects your peace or helps us to even recognize it. Sometimes it can feel like we are constantly swimming upstream, opposing the status quo. We can feel like misfits in this world as we try to follow you faithfully and live in the upside down ways that your prophets, including your son, Jesus, taught us. Help us to see, God, that although none of those situations are particularly comfortable, they *can* be indications that we ARE living faithfully! We need the comfort and the encouragement of your Holy Spirit to spur us on, to give us courage, to let your love and light, your peace shine through us.

O God, we pray for those we know and love who long for your healing. We pray for Eli Gaeddert as the broken bone in his hand heals. We pray for Colby Nafziger as he recovers from a concussion. We pray for Rannie Schmidt as he receives treatment for breathing and lung issues at the Moundridge hospital and we're grateful for his improvement in the last day or so. Lord, continue to uphold Cindy as she continues in her care-giving role while she's still so close to the grief of losing Gene. We know, God, that grief is an ongoing experience... be with those who hold grief for the loss of loved ones, or other losses. Give comfort to those who mourn.

Gracious God, we give you thanks and praise for the healing that both Steve and Sandy have experienced in this past week. We also thank you for healing that Gloria Yoder has had. You have created us with such amazing healing properties and we thank you also, for medical access and know-how, even though it's far from perfect – we benefit enormously and we are grateful.

We know that there are those who do not have access to what they need – those near to us and those much further away. We pray for the people of Puerto Rico as they struggle after the recent hurricane. They had not even fully recovered from the hurricane damage 5 years ago and now another disaster wreaking havoc on them. We pray for the people of Ukraine as they continue to live in the midst of war, fear and anger. We pray also for the Russian soldiers – some of whom don't want to be fighting and who are resisting, and enduring serious consequences. We pray for other parts of the world where your children live with violence, fear and anger. May your Spirit of Love be present. Be with groups like MCC, MDS and others who bring your light into the darkness. Give us generous hearts and a willingness to support their work.

Be with us now, God, as we continue to worship and fellowship together. Bind us together as your people, lead us and guide us and let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts bring you glory. Amen.

GOSPEL READING – MATT 5:3-16

MEDITATION – PASTOR CALEB

In a recent publication for the Mennonite World Conference, Andrew Suderman tells the story from his childhood when his parents were teaching in a Baptist seminary in Bolivia. In summer of 1980 a military commander named Luis Garcia Meza took over the country after a coup d'état.¹

He was an extremely repressive dictator, who like many dictators had a list of banned books. Among the banned books was Matthew 5-7, what we call the “Sermon on the Mount.” That raises the question: *why would a dictator want to ban these chapters of the Bible?* There must be some valid interpretations of these chapters that do in fact threaten abuse of power.

It happens that the seminary had asked the Sudermans to teach a course on the Gospel of Matthew, including the Sermon on the Mount! They considered whether to focus on another book of the Bible to avoid trouble with the government, but decided to take a risk and proceed as planned.

The Scripture you heard includes the Beatitudes, which are statements that begin with “Blessed/Happy are the...” They start Jesus’ grand sermon, and are followed by the memorable proclamation of Jesus to his listeners that they are **salt of the earth** and **light for the world**.

These might seem like harmless passages, not something that would challenge abuse of power. This is especially true when we hear a phrase like being “salt of the earth” in a way that is self-congratulatory. Many American Christians might think Jesus is talking about American Christians, forgetting that followers of Jesus come from many nations of the world and owe primary allegiance to Jesus before any nation.

But what if we read these words of Jesus alongside the Beatitudes? Notice who in the beatitudes are addressed with the words, “blessed” or “happy.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (one version has “hopeless”). Those who mourn or grieve; those who are humble, landless poor, those who hunger and thirst for justice, peacemakers and those who are persecuted or harassed because of doing the right thing.

Then Jesus shifts to address listeners: “Blessed are *you*, when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you.” It is to these people that Jesus turns and says, “*You* are the salt of the earth... *you* are the light of the world.”

You who have been willing to risk insult, persecution, and harassment in order to live boldly for peace and justice. You may be few in number, but you make a big difference, just like a little bit of salt has a large impact.

The start of Jesus’ sermon calls for **solidarity**. Solidarity means standing with others, associating with them, or fostering unity with them. Loving solidarity is at the heart of creating true peace.

¹ <https://mwc-cmm.org/stories/jesus-message-resilience-and-liberation>

It is different than avoiding conflict and also different than charity. Solidarity is essentially the idea of Paul's command in Romans 12 to "associate with the humble" or people of low position.

I notice that the Beatitudes first of all express God's solidarity with humanity: God's solidarity with people who are hopeless, mourn, thirst for righting of wrongs, or are persecuted.

The Beatitudes also call for solidarity from us – "Happy are people who show mercy; who have pure hearts (not ulterior motives); who make peace. We don't have to be poor, disheartened, discriminated against, struggling, or grieving to be among the "blessed," but we at least need to be in solidarity with those who are."

I believe I have told the story before of two teenage boys I knew in Honduras who were tragically shot by a vigilante group. The neighborhood where I lived and worked was poor and unsafe, particularly for young men.

I went with a group of people from my church to the morgue. My memory includes a very long wait outside. It was a rare cool night, and I was shivering in a short sleeve shirt. When it turned out that the family needed something to dry off the body of the one boy in order to dress him for the casket, the pastor was willing to offer the shirt off his back for that purpose.

Across from the morgue was a nice gated community. A neighborhood with more wealth and more security. Probably less violent crime. The brother of one of the boys killed said to me, "I wouldn't want to live in that neighborhood. Those people don't even know their neighbors."

That statement struck me. I think he was saying is that there might be more wealth over there, but we who are poor have solidarity with one another.

Article 23 of our Confession of Faith about the church's relation to the world says that we trust in the power of God's love for our defense, not wealth, not privilege, not even the freedoms we enjoy in our democracy. But if there is anything else that church worldwide might trust in after God's love, I'd say it is loving solidarity between human beings.

So let's consider how we have experienced solidarity. Can you recall times when you've felt the support of others, more than just their well-wishes, but that they were willing to be with you in whatever you were going through at the time.

Then consider where you are in solidarity with others, or could be – whether people within a few miles or people whose faces you might not know. People you personally know are grieving or struggling in any way. People you might not otherwise associate with.

Jesus did not use a word translated "solidarity," that I know of. But the peacemaking Jesus calls us to surely was more than just theory or an idea. It is the fruit of solidarity.

CREDO NICARAGUENSE

This is a song that I learned in Ecuador. It is part of a "peasant's mass" that was written in the late 70s in Nicaragua. It follows the outline of a Catholic mass, and became popular, though never approved for liturgical use by the Catholic church.

The song I will sing is written like a “creed.” We’ve been studying the Confession of Faith and this is a confessional statement. It is significant that it uses a very informal “you” pronoun; very informal way of talking, but it is a little edgy to address God as “vos.” Normally, you would address God with a different pronoun. Calling someone *vos* is something you’d only do with peers. This song very much communicates Jesus’ solidarity with us.

CREDO, FROM NICARAGUAN “PEASANTS’ MASS” (English Translation)

I firmly believe, Lord, that
By your prodigious mind
This whole world was born.
That by your artist’s hand,
Like a primitivist painter,
Beauty flourished.
The stars and the moon,
Little houses and lakes,
Boats navigating the river
On their way to the sea,
Immense coffee farms,
White cotton fields
And forests mutilated
By that criminal ax.

Refrain:

I believe in You,
Architect, engineer
Artisan, carpenter,
Bricklayer, and builder
I believe in You,
Creator of thought,
Of music and the wind
Of peace and love.

I believe in You, worker Christ
Light from light and true
Only begotten of God,

Who, in order to save the world,
In the humble and pure womb of Mary
became incarnate
I believe you were beaten,
Tortured with scorn,
Martyred on the cross,
While Pilate was Praetor
That imperialist Roman,
Hard-fisted and soulless,
Who tried to erase the mistake,
By washing his hands

[Refrain]

I believe in You,
Brother Christ, worker Christ,
Conqueror of death.
Through your immense sacrifice,
You conceived a new humanity
for liberation.
You are resurrecting
in each arm raised
to defend people
from domination and exploitation.
Because you are alive on the farm,
In the factory, in the school
I believe in your ceaseless struggle.
I believe in your resurrection.

[Refrain]

CLOSING SONGS

BENEDICTION

May God, who made this beautiful creation from your prodigious mind,

May God bless you who are merciful and who seek peace.

May Christ be alive and risen in you, on the farm, in school, or wherever you work, and live, and play. Amen