

Eaglehawk Uniting Church

Sunday 25th May 2014

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John 14:15-21 & 25-27; 1 Peter 3:13-22; Philippians 4: 4-7

We can tend to look for Peace in various places. On a recent trip to Canberra, we found a place where you'd think you'd be able to find peace - the Nara Peace Park.



It was a well set out garden, with shady trees, seats and play areas, bbq's and tables, lots of people sitting, laughing, running, kids playing - really very busy and noisy. Not really my kind of 'Peace'.



We can keep looking for that place of peace - BUT - we won't find that place...
... because Peace is never a destination - it's a state of being; a way of living ...

A Short Story ...

Those who know much about me, know that I'm a nurse. Anyone who knows me a bit more knows that for the majority of my career, I've worked with a number of Palliative Care Services.

A typical work day for me might be visiting someone at home who's been told recently that the chemo or radiotherapy they've been having to treat their cancer is no longer effective, and there's no further treatments available to

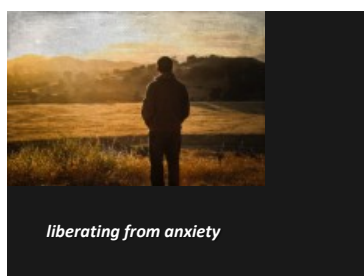
slow down the progression of the disease. I can often feel the disappointment - the despair is so evident.

Another visit might be to someone in hospital who has been admitted with worsening symptoms - nausea, pain, restlessness. The questions don't need to be asked - fear of the unknown - is this how it will be at the end?

My job in both situations is to bring a calming influence, to put my skills and knowledge to use to allay their fears. People want to know the remaining options and what can still be done to bring back some control, balance the equilibrium.

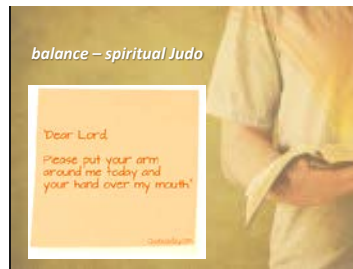
I know that each time I walk in to see a patient, I take a genuine love and care, but also the Peace of God. I was told some time ago - 'You have the Gift of Peace'. Others have told me, 'Peace isn't a gift, it's a Fruit of the Spirit'. So - Peace as a fruit or gift?

In the last few verses of the John reading (25-27) we read that Jesus promised a final gift - His Peace. Jesus bequeathed this gift; for His disciples to have and use - not to keep for themselves. So, Peace can be both a Gift to us, and a fruit of our actions.



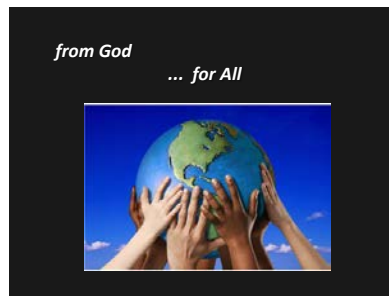
Liberating from Anxiety

Last week's lectionary reading instructed that we should not be worried ... Why? Because the peace of God means we can be liberated from anxiety (John 14: 27) (1 Peter 3: 14) (Philippians 4:6). Don't get me wrong - there are still many things that we should be concerned about, and work to improve situations - injustice, wars, the environment. As Christians, we have a duty to be alert, yes; anxious, no.



Balance - Spiritual Judo

The reminder for us is to 'keep your hearts and your mind in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 4:7). This is a proactive decision. We have a choice to make. The peace of God gives us the opportunity to experience Joy and Gentleness in our work toward the Kingdom here on earth - not passive, but an ongoing balance of strength of conviction, with the love and care demanded by Christ. The struggle is in the ongoing balance, of being forbearing, not overbearing. To experience and pass on that sense of wholeness and general well-being that can be ours.



From God ... for All

To have real peace means to have a clear conscience (1 Peter 3: 16, 21). This peace is not a source within, or without, but from God. This peace is real, sincere, genuine. Again we get a picture of the extent of this gift from Jesus when He gives / bequeaths to the disciples His peace. This peace is ours - given without being retracted - for us, but also to be good news for others.

So as you walk with Christ, may His Peace be yours as part of your being. Take that sense of the presence of God; the awareness of 'oneness' with Jesus' compassionate nature engaged in your life. But be very aware that this peace gives no rest while there is injustice and need in our world.

Take the gift - grow the fruit.

Amen.

Resources

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