

Children's Sermon (blocks)

If you were (asked to) describe the state of affairs in our world to a visitor from some other galaxy what would you say?

(It's great) here. Everyone is of the same mind and spirit. Peace is all around, and justice is so complete that there is not one person anywhere who experiences the pain of exclusion or oppression! Every person has all that they need, and most of what they want! No one argues. No one fights. There is no fear, or violence, or darkness, or war. Smile, smile, smile. Could you be convincing???

Or maybe you could say: (Everyone) here is basically on their own. If they want to eat, they have to work. If they want medical care they have to pay for it. If they want to do something new or different they have to get permission. Everyone is responsible for their own choices, and is responsible for their own finances. If you go broke, or bankrupt, too bad. Everybody is on their own. How about that?

Or maybe you could say: (There) once was a time when people got along here. They were more tolerant of other opinions. They were committed to ensuring the good for all people. People were quick to help, and less quick to criticize others. But all that changed. Instead of looking to an idealized life of justice and peace, (loud) voices began telling the people how bad things were. Those voices challenged the leadership of leaders. Those voices focused on irregularities, and differences as dangerous to our social fabric. What was once understood as good, was said to be evil. (Selfishness) became key in surviving in a world where you didn't count for anything. People narrowed their willingness to understand each other. People became defensive. Walls were built. Security systems became essential. (Fear) became the first thing to consider with any new idea or relationship. Be very afraid became the unspoken way.....

(How) would you describe life on this planet today?

Now, consider this. (Christ) is our peace. Jesus came to deconstruct the walls that divide us, and to draw us together to live in peace. Christ is our peace, and has equipped us to live generously, spiritually, and joyfully.

But, it wasn't always that way, was it. No! (Once) we were strangers. Once we were outsiders. Once we were unknown to anyone. We hungered for connection. We thirsted for companionship. And we were given this amazing gift. (Jesus) came in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus came to meet us where we are, offering us a much better and clearly peaceful way to live out this life. Christ is our peace.

Jesus has called us by name to live in this place a new kind of life. It is one in which no one is judged by worldly (means:) financial status, education level, income, sexual orientation, race, family background, or life experience. (Jesus) is alive in this place, and we call upon his Spirit to bless our journey together.

That sounds so nice, doesn't it? And, I have to tell you (that we) have learned how navigate this treacherous world's divided spirit by our willingness to (accept).....a welcome. Who is welcome? Who is not? The writer of Ephesians lays it on the line: (once) you were not welcome. You weren't. But now, that welcome has been offered and you have accepted it, and congruent with your place in this community, the welcome that was extended to you is to continue....leaving out no one. Ummm, I'm not sure.

Not sure about....what exactly? Now (fear) is given....power. We have to be safe. We have to protect our stuff. We need to make sure those we welcome believe like we do, value what we do, have ethics like we do. And, to protect what we have here.....the welcome becomes conditional. Do you hear that? Fear limits our life. Fear drains the fuel of an engine. Fear seeks to make us small. And as soon as fear arises within us, faith becomes dispensable. For faith to be faithful...would seem (foolish.) Yes.

Jesus showed us that. His domestic healings were welcomed. Heal my shoulder I can't throw a ball; (heal) my eyes I can't see at all. Heal my heart so that I can love; Heal my doubt by grace above...

All was good until Jesus took his mercy to the other side of town, to the other side of the tracks, to the other side of the border, to the other side of the lake. (Jesus) brought forgiveness to the people we fear, in the places we fear, and for beliefs that we fear. And what are those beliefs, exactly? That "they" are human, (like us.) That "they" get hungry, and tired, and hopeful, like us. That "they" want the best for their kids, like us. That "they" worry about this world with its evils and alliances, like us.

And Jesus brings to "them" as well as us a simple truth: in God's eyes we are all like sheep who have gone astray. To protect these children a savior has come. To give (hope) for our world where violence and terror are the tools of fearful people...Jesus Christ is our peace.

In a world that demands walls and fences to protect and separate, Jesus our peace, calls for us (to tear) down the walls. In a world that commands obedience to unjust law which favor the rich....Jesus commands us to show mercy and to love one another. In a world that tolerates a host of -ism's Jesus calls us to do the hard work of educating beyond our fears so (that) sexism, racism, age-ism, and more become extinct on this small blue planet.

Could it be (that if) beings from another galaxy were to land in your backyard that your description of life in this world might begin....(once) we were held captive to sin....but (Jesus) the Christ is our peace....and we no longer resort to fearful reactions to things we do not understand.

For we have been saved by grace through faith not by our own actions, but through the mercy of God upon our sin.....once we were strangers, but now we are made one in Christ Jesus, our peace. (And this) changes everything!

Pastor Alan Field
New Spirit Lutheran Church ELCA

July 22, 2018
Tucson, AZ

(parentheses denote slides)