

Joshua 6:20-24

So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys. Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." So the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her - they brought all her kindred out - and set them outside the camp of Israel. They burned down the city, and everything in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord.

Matthew 10:34-39

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Disruption; Not Peace, But a Sword

Breathe in the peace and mercy of Christ. Exhale the peace and mercy of Christ to those around you. Peace of Christ be with you (and also with you). "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" -said the Prince of Peace. Embrace the paradox.

The theme for Montreat this year was "A Missing Peace" so we spent a lot of time talking about the peace of Christ. But we also spent a lot of time talking about the missing peace. Peace is missing from this broken world. No body likes having their lives disrupted. But we all experience disruption; divorce, anger, fear, natural disaster, man-made disaster, drug addiction and many more. This world is messed up. There's war and corruption. And truth be told, we'd all prefer to ignore it and pretend it's not happening. But disruption happens. How do you find the peace of Christ amidst chaos and disruption? Sitting with someone who is grieving, helping clean up after a natural disaster, supporting someone who is facing a difficult time. We find the peace of Christ

here in our church family. We find it in prayer and meditation. Sometimes it just takes time. I've heard it said that you never truly recover from the loss of a loved one. Over time, it gets better, but in truth we all eventually have to accept the new normal; the new normal of being divorced or widowed, or the new normal of being displaced after a natural disaster. I know it's difficult, but there can be peace amidst the chaos. I do not believe that God ever causes any of those bad things to happen, but just as we heard moments ago, beautiful things can be brought out of the dust. God can transform those hard times into peace. Peace of Christ be with you.

"I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." Said the Prince of Peace. John 14:27 "My peace I give you" Said the Prince of Peace. Embrace the paradox. In my week at Montreat, I was blessed to be a small group leader. I spent several hours every day working with a group of 30 high school kids, approximately 14-18 years old. One of the young men in my group reminded me that most of them were born in a post 9/11 world. They had learned about 9/11 in a history book. And none of them could remember a time before the war with terrorism. I can remember the end of the cold war. The Soviet Union broke up and the Berlin wall came down. I remember watching the wall being torn down on TV. That was it, the cold war was over. Communism had failed and the great USSR super power had been broken. I even remember my history teacher telling us that with the USSR gone, and the cold war officially over, the United States had no one to fear. No more bomb drills ducking under our desks. That was it. We had achieved world peace. As a naïve child I even believed it. I had no idea about the troubles brewing in the Middle East. But, during my freshman year of high school, Operation Desert Storm launched us into a war that is still on-going. We've never truly known peace, not for any sustained time. Peace be with you.

"I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" Said the Prince of Peace. Go back to the passage from Joshua we read just moments ago. This is bit from the battle of Jericho. God had promised Moses that his people would be delivered into the Promised Land. But, it just so happened that the promised land was already occupied. The Canaanites were a civilization that had been around for a long time. They had walled cities. They had their own religion, customs and traditions. They were a great people. This is a story we like to tell the children. I've seen it acted out in VBS programs. The children march around 7 times, blowing horns and clanging cymbals. There's even a song about it "Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho. And the wall came-a-tumblin' down". We tell the children that Joshua was faithful and that God helped them win the battle by causing the walls to come-a-tumblin' down. But, we don't tell them this part of the story do we? Because, what happens next? This is no children's story. They sacked the city, killing all the men, women and children, even the oxen, sheep and donkeys. They took the silver, gold, bronze and iron and burned the rest to the ground. We don't tell the children this part of the story because we'd much prefer to forget about the brutality of war. There was a price to pay to enter the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. War has come a long way since those days. We try to minimize the casualties; we try to avoid killing civilians. But, still we continue to war with one another. It never seems to end. We all seem too comfortable with war. We seem to be okay with it as long as we can justify it, as long as we can call it holy. The peace is missing. Peace be with you.

“I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” said the Prince of Peace. During our week at Montreat we also talked about a type of sacred disruption. In Mark 11: 15-17 we hear about the story of Jesus in the Temple. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And he said “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. But you have made it a den of robbers”. Jesus had just entered the city on what we now call Palm Sunday. The people had cheered for him “Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest”. Then he entered the temple and had a temple tantrum. He completely disrupted the corruption that had become the custom. He disrupted commerce and he disrupted the Passover festival that was going on. People had come from all over and needed to exchange whatever currency they had for shekels that could be used to pay the temple tax. They also needed to buy doves that would be used for sacrifices. So the money changers of course were happy to exchange currency for a hefty profit. And the dove salesmen were selling doves surely for an inflated price. Jesus wasn’t having any of it. This is the sacred disruption we are called to do. We are not to just sit back and ignore it. We are called to be peace makers and disruptors. But why don’t we follow Jesus’ example? Well, because he was dead within a week of this scene. Matthew 10: “I have come to turn man against his father and daughter against her mother...Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Said the Prince of Peace. We are called to take up the cross, to be sacred disruptors. Truth be told, we would all prefer to sit here and ignore the missing peace in the world. But we are called to take up our crosses. So whether that means sitting with the grieving, or being a peacemaker in times of war, or marching in the streets. Or maybe it means turning over the tables of the corrupt. “My peace I give to you” “I did not come to bring peace but a sword”. Said the Prince of Peace. Embrace the paradox. Sometimes we are called to peacemaking in times of disruption and sometimes we are called to sacred disruptors.

I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. Peace of Christ be with you. The peace of Christ is not sitting here, wringing our hands, worrying or praying for peace. The Peace of Christ is action! Speak out against war and violence! Disrupt the status quo! Act! Take up your cross, and follow Him.