

The King + the Kingdom

St. Peter's Church, Pk

2-03-80

Theme: Conflict

Is. 35: 1-10; 1 Joh. 3: 1-8; Matt. 12: 22-32

Most people, if asked to choose between a life of peace and one of conflict, would certainly choose a life of peace. For in the mind of many people these 2 concepts seem to stand in direct opposition to each other - two inconcilable forces. And yet: human life, human society seems to be unable to operate & make progress without these two forces operating either next to each other or in succession to each other. How many of us e.g. could truthfully say that our lives have been without serious tensions or situations of potential or actual conflict?

The discovery of both these forces operating in our minds, our emotions, our situation leads us to rethink our sometimes superficial understanding of peace & conflict. But deeper we also discover that peace is sometimes real & authentic - but sometimes it is a seriously delude ourselves in believing that there is peace when in fact

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Also, we begin to see that conflict need not be negative or destructive - it could become very positive and creative depending how we react to the situation and the issues which are involved.

This leads us on to ask: Where does Christ and our Christian faith enter into this situation? Is He able through his life and messages, through his suffering & death to resolve conflict and to create and ensure Peace?

Traditionally Christ is known as the Prince of Peace, the great Reconciler, the Peacemaker. The false impression has even been created that He is the one who abhors confrontation and avoids conflict in every possible way. The truth, however, is somewhat different: It is in fact true that He has stated that lasting inner peace of mind and heart is to be found in Him - but at the same time His own life and message portrays a situation of constant and growing conflict - first between Him and the church authorities of his day & next between Him and the state authorities. His first public appearance and the sermon He delivers in the synagogue leads to a clash between Him and the official leadership of the church. His acts of healing provoke jealousy and hatred not with the masses but amongst

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the leaders: the contents of his preaching makes Him the target of continued attacks and attempts to trap him (Matth. 12) especially because of his claim of being Son of God. Eventually he lands up in court and is nailed to a cross.

If therefore we wish to understand what it means when we refer to Christ as the great Peacemaker, the Reconciler we should always remember the following important and home truths which His life & teaching, His suffering and death has brought us.

1. Christ does not wish to provoke conflict - nor does He wish us to do so, but equally He does not attempt to avoid controversy and conflict when He believes that such a situation has become necessary in order to expose any form of falsehood, hypocrisy, selfishness, greed or injustice - and to bring truth to light. Know all too well the danger of suppressing -

2. Christ, through his words and actions, reminds us that where peace is procured or maintained at the expense of truth and justice Christ disproves such a condition as false and very soon He sets in motion the forces which will destroy such falsehood and injustice. Even where to all outward appearances, there is law and order, if such law and order is based on a

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system or methods of injustice or oppression, Christ knows that no lasting peace is possible. As the great Prophet He reminds us of the prophecies of the men of God of the Old Testament warning us about the serious  dangers based upon the false cry and assurance of "Peace, Peace" — when in fact there is no peace!

3. Christ never promised us that in this life we as his followers will be spared situations of strife and conflict. What he did assure us of was the inner peace of mind and heart in the midst of controversy and conflict