

Downward Ascent 7: Prickly Peace

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.’ (Matt. 5: 9)

Failing to save ourselves, freed only through Mercy, we rest in everlasting arms: peace like a river. Jesus silences the noisy claims of poverty upon our souls. We are weak, but He is strong. Stilling our hearts in order to listen becomes a gift: instead of attending to old accusations, we wait for the whispers of our Beloved. Glorious peace.

Deeper than the ebbs and flows of daily uncertainties, such peace frees us for others. The war has been won; Jesus now disarms us. Vulnerable but surrounded, we trust the prince of peace as we invite others into His rest. We use wisdom of course, but heavenly wisdom, which St. James describes as ‘pure then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.’ (J 3: 17, 18)

Such peacemaking takes work: sowing peace into others’ lives and seeking to reap the fruitful witness of faith in them can be arduous. We could translate that word ‘peace-making’ as ‘peace-building.’ As builders then, we must be willing to go the distance with loved ones. That includes helping them to deconstruct false sources of peace.

This is where our peacemaking can be viewed as prickly. Whenever others describe the tangled mess of their lives then merrily conclude ‘It’s all good,’ I gently disagree and say: ‘Well, probably not all good. But One who is all good can help you sort things out, and I can help point you in His direction ...’

The truth is, we all crave peace and will go to any lengths to secure it, however falsely. Consider Jesus and the Samaritan woman (JN 4). He offers her liquid peace, His merciful ‘Living Water’ then exposes the false wells she has been drawing from (‘You have had 5 husbands and your current lover is...’v.18)

Unlike the prophets and priests in Jeremiah’s day who ‘dressed others’ wounds superficially and cried peace when there was none’ (Jer 6: 14), Jesus tells us the truth of our illusory loves. He is the Lord of peace and will not tolerate imposters. He knows that the battle being waged for every soul will only be won at the Cross. Peace requires surrender to the One who gave all to gain us.

We are His witnesses, guided by His Spirit. Jesus gives us the good challenge to offer ourselves wisely, peaceably, and truthfully to those on whom His favor rests. The Spirit has directed me to a wonderful seeker who wants to know Jesus but on his terms. He is disquieted when I interrupt our peaceful chats with the hard truths of sin, evil, and the greatest deception of all: ‘It’s all good...’

He has a long way to go, as do I as a peacemaker. Yet I have come to accept the questioning look

in my friend's eye as a fulfillment of Mark 9:50: 'Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.'

'Comfort the afflicted, afflict the comfortable.'

PRAYER for Monday April 7th: 'Father, show us the peace that results from surrendering our 'get-rich quick' schemes. Forgive our efforts to resurrect ourselves. We are as tired of them as You are. Thank You for loving us when we are tempted to disdain ourselves. Show us the peace of surrender.'

PRAYER for Tuesday April 8th: 'Remind us of the battle You waged for us. As we approach Calvary once more, remind us of what You won for us. Disarm us with the truth that You secured perfect peace for us there. Help us to know the authority You have given us, even and especially in our vulnerable areas.'

PRAYER for Wednesday April 9th: 'Father, give us strength to be Your peace-builders. Grant us courage and patience for the long haul approach to helping others establish a foundation of peace anchored in You. Grant us the peace of working in tandem with the You whose yoke is easy and burden light.'

PRAYER for Thursday April 10th: 'Father, grant us discernment when we cry 'peace when there is none.' Remove the beam from our eyes, that we may see the speck in our friends' eyes.'

PRAYER for Friday April 11th: 'Father, grant us wisdom to recognize the false peace loved ones have made. Help us to pray for them. In particular, we lift up_____. Jesus, we ask that You might reduce him/her to Your unfailing love. Be their peace, we pray.'

PRAYER for Saturday April 12th: 'Show us Jesus how, when, and if we might address the false peace they have made with any number of things. Grant us more love and more discernment than we have. Teach us to be peacemakers that reveal the peace only You can give them. In that way, might we manifest the truth that as peacemakers, we have become Your sons and daughters?'