

Swords into Plowshares Meditation on Isa 2: 1-5

Isaiah 2: 1-5

In days to come

the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

³ Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

⁵ O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!

Dear Randy, sisters and brothers at Peace Church,
most of you know how much I love Desmond Tutu and his theology. I love the way he speaks of "God's Dream" when he expresses the way he imagines the kingdom of God. The world as it could be – at its very best... this is God's dream... It is part of God's dream not to be alone – no lonely, isolated high above God, but a God touching the earth and being in all of us. It is part of God's dream that we become God's co-workers, God's partners, God's co-creators in the ongoing process of shaping the world and making it a safe space for all beings – no matter who we are, where we come from and what we believe.

"Dear child of God," Desmond Tutu writes in his inspiring book "God has a dream", "before we can become God's partners, we must know what God wants for us. I have a dream, God says, Please help me to realize it. It's a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty, its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness, its alienation and disharmony are changed into their glorious counterparts, when there will be more laughter, joy and peace, where there will be justice and goodness and compassion and love and caring and sharing. I have a dream that swords will be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, that my children will know that they are one family, the human family, God's family, my family."

And then Desmond Tutu continues to explain that in God's family, there are no outsiders. All are insiders. Black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight, Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Christians, Buddhist and Hindu, Palestinian and Arab, Russians and Ukrainians... and we could go on with that list – all belong!
All belong!

We have heard of God's dream through the prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micha and others... Modern prophets and great leaders like Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi spoke and wrote about it: God's dream...

The visions and successes of these prophets, in our time and long ago, helped change their nations and inspire the rest of the world in its struggles for equality and justice and change.

Isaiah focusses on future events, on announcements of salvation, on the establishment of peace and justice coming from Jerusalem, from the house of God, from their religious centre, and the heart of their beliefs.

Today's text is rich in themes that call for theological reflection, and the reign of God. It drafts images for international politics, justice and peace, as God wants them. It speaks to the people, asks them, whether when they read these verses, wouldn't they too long for peace – eternal peace – God's peace – peace in God's world wide family.

We are encouraged to turn away from war, from shedding blood, and destroying homes and lands. Isaiah's poem is not a prediction but an affirmation that history will reach its goal. That goal, the reign of God, will involve a radical transformation of existing conditions, - from nationalism and conflict, to unity and peace.

The future is God's.

People will live new lives.

People will follow God's call.

Weapons will be turned into agricultural tools.

Everyone will turn away from war.

All are invited to live in justice and righteousness.

All shall be peacemakers.

Could one dare to respond and participate in this world of God?

Could world leaders dare and see in this vision international political dimensions?

All nations will come to one place, one point, one moral, one agreement, and the result will be peace?

The world would be one...

How I pray that the world could be one

How I pray that we could all be one family!

Would we then let our brother's or sister's family exist in poverty?

Would we let them go hungry?

Would we bombard them, shoot at them, and wipe them out?
Extinguish all their means for life?
Would we?
NO!
We would not!

Desmond Tutu writes: "Members of a family have a gentle caring and compassion for one another."

How I pray that we will open our eyes and see the real, true identity of each of us.
And that this one is not a black or white, rich, poor, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist or Jew, but a brother, a sister, and treat each other as such.

How I pray that we could recognize our common humanity, that we belong together, that our destinies are bound up in one another's, that we can be free only together.

How I pray that a glorious world will come into being where all of us live in harmony as members of one family, the human family, God's family.

A genuine and lasting transformation would take place.

And God's dream would become reality – through our doing...

How I pray...

Imagine there's no heaven

It's easy if you try

No hell below us

Above us, only sky

Imagine there's no countries

It isn't hard to do

Nothing to kill or die for

And no religion, too

Imagine all the people

Livin' life in peace

You may say I'm a dreamer

But I'm not the only one

I hope someday you'll join us

And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions

I wonder if you can

No need for greed or hunger...

Imagine all the people

Sharing all the world

You may say I'm a dreamer

But I'm not the only one

I hope someday you'll join us

And the world will live as one

(John Lennon)

“The truth is, we need each other,” writes Desmond Tutu. We cannot survive and thrive without one another. He introduces the African idea of Ubuntu. Our humanity is caught up in one another’s. The lonely, isolated human being is a contradiction to God’s dream and intention for us.

“God is smart. God does not make us too self-sufficient,” says Desmond Tutu. We have our own gifts and that makes us unique. But I have gifts that you do not have, and you have gifts that I don’t have. We are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God’s creation. This interdependence is Ubuntu. It’s the essence of being human.

My humanity is bound up in yours – no matter what.

I am human because I belong.

A person with Ubuntu is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open to each other, available for each other, willing to be vulnerable, affirming others...

They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, oppressed and hurt.

When there is war in one part of the world, the whole world is suffering...

When one member is humiliated, all are wounded...

As long as one member suffers, no one can be truly happy!

How I pray that we shall all have Ubuntu. ...that we move closer to God so that we can love each other like family, like sisters and brothers, regardless of who we are and of what we have achieved or not.

God’s love is infinite. There is and will always be enough of it.

Before you can love others, you must love yourself.

And to love yourself, you must know, from the bottom of your heart and with all your soul, that God loves you now, and loves you always.

Amen.