

November 28th – 1st Sunday in Advent

Centering Breath Prayer: Child of peace...let me walk in your light.

Opening Prayer:

Holy God, once more I come sit at your feet and bask in your light as a part of the journey of love. I want to soak up as much of your ways as possible to make it through another day. So much to do, so little time, and so many people to please along the way. As we officially begin the Advent season today, I would pause to be renewed by your presence and strengthened by your love. Let us continue our walk together. In your Holy name, I pray. Amen.

Scripture: Isaiah 2:1-5

Key Verses: Isaiah 2:4-5: (4) “The Lord will mediate between nations and will settle international disputes. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore. (5) Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord!” (NLT).

♪♪♪ “Ain’t gonna study war no more, I ain’t gonna study war no more, ain’t gonna study war no more” ♪♪♪ Thus go the lyrics to a popular gospel song from years ago. The origins of the song, may very well go back to our scripture passage for today. When the Kingdom of God comes on earth, there will be no war. God will mediate between nations and settle all disputes. In fact, there will most likely be no nations because we will all be part of one Kingdom living in harmony with one another. But that wonderful day has not arrived yet. Nations strive against one another for little reason and peaceful coexistence is woefully absent most of the time. Hatred runs rampant and peace on earth seems an impossible dream.

There is a popular song by John Lennon, formally of the Beatles, called “Imagine.” It paints a lovely picture of people learning to get along with one another and building a world of peace. But the song is flawed because it begins by saying, “Imagine there’s no heaven...” In essence it is telling us to imagine there is no God and that we are capable of achieving such a world without such a being. Our own selfish, and often greedy natures preclude such a thing from ever happening on our own. Yet the Kingdom of God is exactly like the picture painted in Lennon’s song. We cannot achieve it on our own, but with God’s presence within us, nothing is impossible.

Today is the formal beginning of Advent, the season of preparation for Christ’s coming in glory and power. We celebrate the incarnation, the arrival of Immanuel on earth so many years ago and in its remembrance we prepare our hearts for the final coming when the Kingdom of God becomes a reality on earth as well as in heaven. Our journey of love is one of peace, even though peace seems far beyond our capabilities. Our scripture passage today gives us a clue to how this will be achieved in our final verse. “Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord!” This season in which we spend so much time preparing for the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child is also a season to remember who he is and why he came and what it all means

to us here and now. Yes, we will celebrate the birth of a baby. We will look at the circumstances and the few facts we have been given. But, if we do not see meaning in it for now, then it is just meaningless ritual. This journey of love is all about the meaning behind the event, the *'light of the Lord'* in which we must walk in order to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth. The birth of the Christ Child began the journey of love for Jesus. But Immanuel was far more than a baby in a manger and his love for us could never have been given had he remained a child no matter how special. It is not to the Christ Child that we go for guidance for our lives. It was not the Christ Child who showed us the way to live with one another in the Kingdom of God. It was not the Christ Child who died for us upon a cruel cross. And it was not the Christ Child who rose from the grave and gave us eternal life. It was the Light of the World, the *"light of the Lord,"* who illuminates our way into the Kingdom of God and who walks with us on our journey of love. "Imagine there's no heaven?" Not me. I imagine living in a heaven on earth where I ♪♪♪ "Ain't gonna study war no more, I ain't gonna study war no more, ain't gonna study war no more" ♪♪♪

Additional Scripture: John 1:1-14

Questions for reflection and/or journaling:

1. How can I walk in the light of the Lord?
2. What can I take from today's journey for my present life?
3. What "sword" or "spear" can I turn into a "ploughshare" or "pruning hook?"

Suggestions for action:

1. Phrase for your tree: **WALK IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD**
2. "Imagine" what the Kingdom of God is like. Write down some descriptive words to remind you to take on your journey.
3. Continue you your prayers for peace throughout the coming week.

Closing Prayer:

Precious Christ Child, I am so thankful that you grew up and didn't stay a tiny, ineffectual child. Show me how to walk in your light as we continue our journey of love together. Show me the "swords" and "spears" in my life that need to be changed into "ploughshares" and "pruning hooks." Illuminate the way as we walk together throughout the day. In your shining name, I pray. Amen.