

## **Homily – World Peace Day**

**Rob Keim**

**September 20, 2020 – St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church**

Tomorrow we celebrate World Peace Day, an international holiday that is dedicated to the absence of war and violence. I think this is a worthy holiday for our church since part of the kingdom of God would be realized with the absence of war and violence.

For a moment set aside the Coronavirus and the fires and let's daydream for a moment about world peace.

Peace in Palestine, Gaza and Israel.

Peace in the Ukraine.

Peace in Nigeria and Southern Sudan.

Peace in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

Let's daydream a little more and imagine safety from gun violence.

Safety from domestic violence.

Safety from vendetta and retribution.

Safety from racism.

The kingdom of God on earth would certainly include peace and the absence of war and violence.

Last week I talked about trauma and the way we hold onto bad things in the moving centers of our bodies. Forgiveness includes healing from trauma both as individuals and as a community.

This week I want to go back to basic resentment that we hold in our minds. We can help to restore hope and peace in the world when we learn to let go of our resentments for things that have happened to us or to our loved ones.

We resent that someone else got the job we wanted.

We resent something that was said about us.

We resent that a loved one left us through divorce or even death.

We resent that thousands of people died on 9-11, or we resent the hundreds of thousands who died in the invasion of Iraq two years later.

We resent when a beloved Supreme Court Justice dies and others see it as an opportunity.

Nelson Mandela is quoted in having said, "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."

Ann Landers also has a good quote about resentment. She said, "Hanging onto resentment is letting someone you despise live rent-free in your head."

Maybe you are like me. We often allow our resentments to cause ourselves a lot of pain.

Maybe, just maybe, it is because we don't know how to let go of resentment.

In today's Gospel lesson Jesus shares a story about some workers who are full of resentment that those who only worked an hour were paid the same as those that worked all day.

*And to this the landowner responded, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?"*

The kingdom of God will have world peace. It will be built on a foundation of healthy conflict. It will be enabled when we heal from trauma. It will be a world in which we forgive others, and ourselves; and it will be a world in which we let go of resentments for things that have been done to us or to our loved ones. God has grand, seemingly impossible, things in store for our world, but we must do our part.

Resentments come in so many different ways, but many have a significant common element. They are based on an event in the past, which we wish had never happened. And, actually it is more than a wish. Our resentment is actually a demand that the action in the past be erased or happen differently.

I demand that you had not taken that money from me two years ago.

I demand that you had not died twenty years ago.

I demand that the treasured inheritance went to me instead of to you.

I demand that those things were never written in the paper about me.

But, the past cannot be changed. As much as we demand it, the past is the past and time machines have not yet been invented. And, until we stop making a demand of the past, we will not be able to let go of resentment.

Here is some advice I heard from a counselor about letting go of resentment. I've shared this advice before. First, acknowledge that the past is the past, and second, change the demand to a preference. Instead of demanding that the past be changed, shift your language and thinking to "I would have preferred that this had not happened."

Let me repeat that, "I would have preferred that this had not happened."

When we start using this language and thinking it starts the process to begin letting go of resentment.

Yes, some of our resentments are for things that are still occurring or recurring, but so many of them are for things that have happened in the past. "Ask yourself this: 'how does resentment help me have a better future?' If it does, keep resenting. If it doesn't, then try forgiving."

Part of the beauty is that "forgiveness is giving yourself back what you had before." But we often don't move to forgiveness because we feel a need to stay with the resentment.

Now, it can be very useful to understand our motivations for clinging to the resentment. Maybe it is for safety. "If I forgive them they will hurt me again." This is quite valid and it can be important to move to a place of safety before removing the protection that can be provided by resentment. Safety is important.

Or, maybe we hold onto resentment out of a sense of justice. "They need to be punished for what they did." Or, "If I forgive them, how will the world know they

did a bad thing.” Or, “If I forgive them it will be saying that what they did didn’t matter.”

These reasons make sense to us, don’t they? They make sense but at the same time, these justice objections are hardly ever resolved in a satisfying way. A more satisfying approach is to forgive even if justice objections will not be met. As I said last week “forgiving someone won’t make them nice; it will, however, make you nicer.”

And, one thing we should remember is that forgiving does not necessarily mean reconciling. Forgiving and reconciling are two different things. “When we forgive evil we do not excuse it, we do not tolerate it, we do not smother it. We look the evil full in the face, call it what it is, let its horror shock and stun and enrage us, and only then do we forgive it.” [Louis B. Smedes]

That is part of the effectiveness of the Cross of Jesus. Two thousand years ago when our God became human for thirty-three years, he suffered injustice, horrible physical pain, and death. Yet, he met these things with grace, a level of grace that is beyond our understanding. And, today even when we don’t see it, God continues to shower us with grace and unmerited love.

Let me share a Cherokee parable about this grace of Jesus. “A Cherokee elder was teaching his grandchildren about life. He said to them, ‘A fight is going on inside me. It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance self-pity, guilt, inferiority, jealousy, lies and resentment. The other wolf stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and grace. This same fight is going on inside of you and every other person too.’ The children thought about it for a minute and then one child asked his grandfather, ‘Which wolf will win?’ The wise one simply replied: ‘The one I feed.’”

Now, on Friday with the setting of the sun and the start of Rosh Hashana, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died from pancreatic cancer. She was a beautiful woman with a heart for justice whose legacy is unfortunately overshadowed by the fight that is about to ensue about replacing her on the Supreme Court. This is a time that is fraught with the creation of new and deep wounds of resentment. Which wolf will you feed over the next four months. I hope it is the wolf that RBG represents. The one of joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and grace.

World Peace Day and the kingdom of God will be a result of the wolf we feed. It will be based on healing from body trauma, forgiveness to relieve pain, and letting go of resentments that keep old hurts alive. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with us.