



God's Dream for the World

Eleventh in the Fall sermon series, "Taking Jesus Seriously"

Isaiah 65:17-25 • Luke 21:5-19 • II Thessalonians 3:6-13

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost ~ Sunday, November 17th, 2019

First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois

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*Text: The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
(Isaiah 65: 29)*

They will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to the authorities and put you in prison. (Luke 21:12)

Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right. (II Thessalonians 3: 13)

The reading from Isaiah is the inspiration behind The Peaceable Kingdom whether it be in song, poetry, or music.

God's dream for the world is one of hope. It is the hope that one day two of the ancient world's most pervasive scourges would be eliminated; high infant mortality and low life expectancy.

While few reliable records exist scholars have been able to determine that prior to the 19th century, roughly one third to one half of children survived to the age of 5. Many of our childhood nursery rhymes, Ring Around the Rosie, for example, testify to this reality. If a child lived to the age of 10, they had a good chance of living to celebrate their 50th birthday.

There is good news and bad news in Isaiah's vision. The good news is that God's Kingdom will ultimately come. The bad news is that God calls us--those who take Jesus seriously--to implement the vision. You see, God's vision for this world is hope filled but it is not cheap hope. God will not deliver it to us on a silver platter. God expects us to do the heavy lifting.

Men and women, boys and girls who take Jesus seriously are resilient and tenacious in the face of the dark forces of this world.

In our gospel lesson we see Jesus responded to his disciples wonder of the Temple's grandeur. As beautiful was, Jesus reminded his disciples like all things in this world, it will one day lay in ruin. Not one stone will be left on top of another. In the language of apocalyptic literature Jesus said those who take him seriously will find themselves misunderstood, slandered; maybe even martyred.

It is not by accident that totalitarian regimes have banned bibles and tried to control churches. Nothing threatens the status quo more than the God's dream for the world.

It is not by accident that those who hear God's call and take Jesus seriously built hospitals (St. Francis and Methodist, in our own community, and Presbyterian in other communities) call for basic preventative health care.

It is not by accident that those who hear God's call and take Jesus seriously build schools and universities to battle illiteracy and ignorance.

It is not by accident that those who hear God's call and take Jesus seriously develop and run programs that feed the hungry, and clothe the naked.

It is not by accident that those who hear God's call and take Jesus seriously confront poverty and war, institutional racism and sexism.

It is not by accident that those who hear God's call and take Jesus seriously create ministries like Habitat for Humanity, work for fair housing, build houses, and develop ministries for the homeless and the refugee.

And it is not by accident that in each of these ventures those who take Jesus seriously are misunderstood, called naive, criticized, threatened, persecuted, and even killed.

Those who take Jesus seriously must, in the words of our epistle lesson, "Get to work doing what is right", namely, working toward that day when the wolf and the lamb, the lion and the ox, when all of God's children are secure, fed, housed, cared for, and beloved.

To God be the glory. Amen.