

“Justice and Peace will Kiss Each Other”

Sermon by Dan Harrison, Pastor, Church of the Covenant, Lynchburg, VA 7/11/2021

Psalm 85:10 “Steadfast love and the truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss each other.”

There is a promise in this ancient scripture: “Steadfast love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss each other” (Psalm 85:10). It’s like we’ve been watching this movie and we’ve been waiting with great anticipation for the two main characters to fall in love and kiss. Forget the romance, we just want to see them finally solidify their relationship. And the story I’m speaking of is an ancient one: Where justice and peace find their home with one another. Finally and forever.

Our struggle is not a new one, is it? It is a very old one. We all long to see the day when the wolves and the sheep are no long enemies, where the lion and the deer can finally drink water together, without fear. Where racism is a thing of the past, but we are not there yet and everyday we must work through those old prejudices, and the system that is stacked against certain people in our communities. We must work towards that justice, that equal and equitable balance, and we must not forget that Justice and Peace have not kissed just yet. But many of us believe they will! And that’s why we won’t give up...

We believe in that part of the story. These two characters, Justice and Peace, are destined to be together. And as many wise people have pointed out to me. It begins with us. Are we, internally, marrying the two. Does Justice and Peace live in harmony inside of us. I invite us all to look inwardly and seek the harmony within.

Such harmony begins with self-acceptance. To hate oneself is easy. We can think of a million things we could have done differently: The people we’ve hurt, the things we didn’t say but wish we had, the times we wish we would have done something more but we didn’t. This is easy. But to love oneself and become a presence of hope and love for others, this is the hard part. Do you remember the story of the man who lived among the dead, who had been rejected by his village as demon possessed. He stopped Jesus on the way to the village asking for help. Jesus spent the whole day with him, healing him, and never made it to the village. When Jesus returned to his boat, the man asked to go with him. Jesus said, -no, please go to your village and show them your transformation. They will be amazed.- Instead of taking the tortured man out of his environment, he returned him to his people, to be the difference: To be a living presence of love and hope to others.

Have justice and peace married themselves in your own life? And if not, how can such a union be made? **Step 1:** Forgive yourself. **Step 2:** Be a light to others, a beacon of forgiveness and restoration to them as well. **Step 3:** Don’t stop changing/learning/transforming. This is the only way justice can be achieved and peace secured. “No justice, no peace” isn’t just a slogan in the protests. It is a reality for most people. Let their suffering become your own.

I end with something our late pastor David Edwards so eloquently said: “Jesus said we are the light of the world and the salt of the Earth, that we should let our lights shine forth. The light is the very life of

God in us and it strives to be expressed in the ways that we live and the decisions we make” (from “What Belongs to God,” p23). So, I say this. Burn bright, Burn long, and don’t let life blow out your flame, but instead may life give it more oxygen every day. This is the test: Endurance.