

Let There Be Peace

By Scott Runyon

FBCB

Dec 10, 2017

Mark 1:1-8

CHILDREN'S TIME

There is a time in the beginning of the service when we all get up and greet each other. Some of you might go running around between people and some of you shake hands with people. Everyone says hello to each other.

In some churches people will say "The peace of Christ be with you." and the other person will reply back "And also with you." These churches call that time "Passing the Peace" because as followers of Jesus we have God's peace in our lives and we share that peace with each another.

Let's try that with the congregation right now. Let's stand up and with a big smile say to the congregation "The peace of Christ be with you." And they will respond "And also with you."

Great!

So we share peace with each other. That is part of our job as followers of Jesus. We share

peace not only with other followers of Jesus, but everyone we meet. We can do that everywhere.

SERMON

Take a look at this painting. In a few moments of silence, notice the colors, the shapes, the mood, the contrasts. Consider how it speaks to you.

Now as you look at the painting, listen to this passage from Mark.

READ MARK 1:1-8

What did you hear? What do you see?

What does it mean to make a path straight? What does it mean to clear and prepare the way?

I remember that morning of 9-11 when I was living in an apartment in Brighton and flipped on the TV and saw a plane crash into the Twin Towers. Time stood still in the moment. I wasn't concerned with work later that day. The past week of concerns faded away and what I might be doing in the coming week never crossed my mind. Nothing else mattered in that moment except what was happening in New York.

That was a kairos moment.

The ancient Greeks had two understandings of time. First is chronological time where one thing follows the next in sequence. Chronos time has to do with quantity.

The second way of understanding time is kairos. Kairos has much more to do with quality than quantity.

Kairos time is understood not by a sequence of events, but by a moment in which something profound, important or critical happens. It is often understood as an opportune moment to act or to listen. It is often a pivotal point that changes the course of things.

The ancient Greeks understood kairos as the moment that an archer let go of an arrow with sufficient speed and accuracy to hit the center of a target.

People around the world, and especially those who lived in Germany on November 9, 1989 will remember a kairos moment when the leader of East Germany said that those from West Germany could cross the Berlin Wall whenever they wanted.

This statement created an amazing uproar as people from both East

and West Germany stormed the wall and began to chip away at the concrete.

November 9 launched a celebration across the formerly uncrossable barrier. As the wall began coming down in places, people from each side met in the middle and rejoiced together. They knew that their lives would never be the same.

A kairos moment!

The fall of the Berlin Wall truly changed the course of life for many people. What happened that day carved out space for new and creative work — it created the space for a new life to come into being — for peace.

In 1990, shortly after the Berlin Wall fell, 118 artists from 21 different countries got together around this grey “untouchable” wall to transform it into an open-air gallery of art. Today there still stands a stretch of more than a mile and on the east side it is called the “Berlin Wall East Side Gallery.”

This length of wall is covered with 105 murals and artistic graffiti that speak to the emotions and events during the time that the wall fell. Many of these include words and images with messages of peace and liberation. That is what the fall

of the dividing wall meant — peace and liberation.

John the Baptist also came proclaiming in a kairos moment. A moment that people looked forward to for generations — a moment when peace and liberation might be ushered in by God and change their lives forever.

We talk about peace during this season and then we turn on the TV, radio, open our Yahoo home page news, or see the headlines on our phone and realize that there is not much peace in the headlines.

Instead we see shootings, sexual harassment testimony, talk of governmental collusion, threats of war, race conflict, hurricanes in the south and west, and fires now burning across the landscape of California.

We wonder, “Where is there peace? When will we know peace?”

I think the early disciples could probably relate as they were hiding out for their lives and fearful of being imprisoned, tortured and killed.

Two months ago we talked about how peace is a foundation within God’s community. We talked about how peace was not merely

the absence of war. It means so much more.

Peace, or “shalom” as the Hebrews called it, is the natural state of human beings as God created us. So, bringing shalom into the world is actually a restoration of who we truly are.

But before we can have shalom, there needs to be the space for it to exist. This space is about balance ... unison ... harmony ... synergy. It does not imply that we think alike, but in the space of shalom those with differing opinions and thoughts all have a place.

This is a space where energy flows within people and between people in relation to the world.

In the space of shalom there is space for people to breathe, to move, to be well, and to be whole.

This is the space that was created in 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell, and this is the space created by John the Baptist when he prepared the way, cleared the path, announced the coming of the messiah.

What did John do to create that space for peace? He had conversations with people and spoke out so that all could hear

about what God was doing. He pointed to the people's history, to the prophets who foretold of a messiah. He alerted people to the current fulfillment of these prophecies.

The effect was that people stopped in their tracks — they took the ear buds out of their ears, turned off their TVs, put away their phones, stopped texting, and stepped out of the board meeting. The concerns that had been on their minds no longer mattered. They hit pause on the status quo.

In that space, in that calm, they could see clearly. Everything they were about to do dropped off the agenda, and a new agenda was about to be created.

Inside this space is an empty canvas, a lump of clay, a raw piece of metal, an open field — a place to create something new. And in that space God wants to create peace through you and me.