

Sermon Seed

Text: Psalm 1:1-6

Theme: Grow Justice, Know Peace

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I. GOD'S INVITATION TO A WAY OF JUST PEACE

A. GOD SPEAKS (1:1)

1. God speaks about our happiness
2. God speaks about being careful who we listen to

B. GOD INVITES ALL TO A WAY OF FAITH (1:2)

1. God speaks, inviting all to beware of following the wrong path
2. God speaks, teaching the path of love

II. GOD'S EXAMPLE FOR JUST PEACE BEING ROOTED IN LOVE

A. GROWING JUSTICE, KNOWING PEACE (1:3)

1. God illustrates faith needing a strong foundation
2. God illustrates faith that lives in every season, and never dies
3. God equates faith with fulfillment

B. GOD'S APPEAL FOR JUST PEACE (1:4)

1. God examples what happens to those without faith
2. God calls upon us to remain strong in our faith

III. TRUSTING GOD'S LOVE TO OFFER PEACE AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

A. TWO WAYS TO LIVE (1:5)

1. God watches those who offer loving care, and those who do not
2. God speaks of the final judgment given to all

B. GOD'S CALL FOR LOVING CARE (1:6)

1. God calls forth loving care that chooses equal justice for all
2. God calls forth loving care that chooses peace towards all
3. God calls forth life eternal, for all whose faith is rooted in loving care

Narrative Context:

In the first Psalm, we see that peace and justice for all is essential to true happiness. In referencing our happiness, God offers humanity two ways to live. In verse one, God speaks about our happiness and tells us to be careful about the path we take. In that, people of faith are encouraged to be careful with what we say and where we go, because it can be a precursor to what we do. In verse two, God continues to speak and invites all to be careful not to follow the wrong path. Then, in verse three, we hear the central lesson in the passage, which calls for everyone's faith to be rooted in God's love. Verse three also illustrates how we can experience God's strength, which is available to sustain us during every season of life. And, verse three suggests that our faith in God's love will produce good fruit, by the loving acts that help to grow justice, so that all might someday, know peace.

In verse four, we hear God's appeal for all to follow the way of peace and justice. As God illustrates what happens to those without faith, and encourages others to remain strong in their faith. In verse five, we hear about the closeness of God in our lives. As we learn that God offers to us two ways to live, and is watching the actions of those who choose to offer loving care, and those who do not. Verse five also tells us God will be the final judge for our lives. In closing, verse six speaks of God's call for everyone to choose eternal life, by offering loving care towards others, in the way that God offers loving care to us.

Conflicts at Play:

The conflicts at play arise as God speaks to the two ways that people can choose to live. The first way, is to have faith that is strong like a tree rooted in God's love and care. This way, withstands the storms of life, and produces the good fruits of love and care in every season. The second way, is choosing not have faith in God. So, when the storms of life occur, not having faith in God's love, is like being a tree that is uprooted by the winds and the rain of life. And, therefore, the lack of faith in God causes the tree to die.

Way of Just Peace:

In moral distress, the first Psalm, suggests that peace and justice for all is essential to true happiness. Therefore, in referencing our happiness, God speaks, and offers humanity two ways to live. In verse one, God speaks about our happiness and tells us to be careful about the path we take. In that, people of

faith are encouraged to be careful with what we say and where we go, because it can influence what we do.

Today's New Testament lectionary reading, Mark 9:30-37, examples this message of growing in justice and knowing peace, when Jesus says to His disciples during their walk through Galilee, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days, he will rise." 'But his disciples did not understand what he meant, and were afraid to ask him about it.'

And so, during their walk, instead of asking Jesus questions about what He meant, the disciples began arguing amongst themselves over the question of, "Who will be the greatest, among them?" So, when they reach their destination, Jesus speaks to them about their arguing, and then, when He sits down, Jesus calls in the twelve disciples to listen to Him. In those moments, Jesus teaches them about God's ways, and says to them, that "in order to be in first place, they must be a servant to all."

Jesus speaking to the disciples about the error of their ways shows them that "This is important," as the way we treat each other is central to what it means to follow the ways of Jesus. It goes to the core of what it means to live in the Kin-dom of God on earth, and to be the Church. It also shows how radical Jesus' teaching is. It is one of the greatest over-turnings in all of history. As all of our assumed ideas about importance and greatness, become meaningless. And, all of the boasting of power is irrelevant when Jesus stops the entire human parade, and puts it, in reverse.

Indeed, what Jesus says to the disciples about being a servant leader upsets the way society views things so much so, that we, ourselves, might become hesitant at the thought of accepting it as our way of life. As it is clear, that Jesus' disciples thought of their calling to follow Him as an opportunity for privilege, power and position, for themselves.

For it seems that the last thing the disciples were thinking about was the kind of sacrificial giving of themselves that Jesus speaks of. In that, Jesus tells the disciples that if anyone would be first, they must be last of all, and servant of all. And to illustrate this way of love and care, He takes a child and puts the child in the midst of the disciples. Then, Jesus puts the child into His arms, and says, "Whoever receives one such child, in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me, but Him, who sent me." (v. 37)

This is why verse two of today's Psalm, references God's invitation for all to be mindful of not following the wrong path. As Jesus' example in Mark's gospel about the child being important, represents all people, including those who are not held in high regard for any earthly given reason. The child stands for all of those without a notable place in society, and all who are without a voice. Jesus uses the illustration of the child to call upon the disciples to serve peacefully, in advocating for justice, and to offer kindness. Jesus also calls upon them to care for others, even those who systematically and culturally have not been given much value in the world.

Thus, treating everyone with equal value is a central lesson for our faith in God, which is also echoed in the third verse of today's Psalm. As we hear God's call for everyone's faith to be rooted in love. In this verse, we also hear how we can experience God's strength to sustain us during every season of life. Moreover, verse three suggests that our faith in God's love will produce good fruits, by our loving acts that help to grow justice, so that all might someday, know peace.

As this message of growing our loving care for all people is also heard in today's reading from the prophet Jeremiah, who shares that when we seek God's wisdom, we can even care for those who seek to harm us. For we are told that God will open our eyes, and show us the ones who plan to do evil deeds against us. Therefore, even when we are faced with difficult situations, we can be rooted in our faith like the prophet Jeremiah, who says, "God-of-the-Angel-Armies," will be the fair judge. In that, Jeremiah's example of God's faithful love and care growing inside us also speaks to verse four of the today's Psalm. As God's appeal for all to follow the way of peace and justice, in verse four, illustrates what happens to those without faith, and encourages believers' faith to remain strong.

The fifth verse of the first Psalm goes on to speak about the closeness of God in our lives. This verse reminds us that God cares. We have the freedom and space to choose the path for our lives. And yet, God is close. God is nearby watching the actions of those who choose to offer loving care, and those who do not. And so, as we seek to grow justice and know peace in our daily living, the Psalm teaches us in verse six, to love all people no matter what, by choosing the pathway of God, who will be the final judge for each of our lives. And this is the good news for us, today. As God's call for us to love others as God loves us, is the way to eternal blessings and happiness. Let it be so. **Amen.**