What price are you willing to pay for peace?!

We who live in the land of the free and the home of the brave have a saying - “Freedom isn't free”. It is a reminder that peace has a price. Thirty seven million military and civilian lives was the price for peace in 1918. The price for peace rose to sixty million military and civilian lives in 1945. Today it is hard to determine the price of peace because we are still counting the cost. Freedom isn’t free; peace has a price.

Considering the rising cost for peace, scientists have been working on a more economical solution. It sounds like it is lifted right off the script of a Star Trek episode but currently scientist are experimenting with something called a hive-mind. The idea is based on the behavior of ants. The behavior of an individual ant embodies more than just its own responses to the environment. It also reveals the collective response of the colony to the environment they inhabit. They “think” as one mind and act accordingly. Scientist are trying to find a way to link our minds into one. The thought is that if we share the thoughts and feelings of others we will be less likely to inflict harm on each other and will therefore, live in peace. They have already been able to establish a brain-to-brain interface between rats that caused one rat to react to the pain inflicted on another rat. If the scientists are successful it appears all you would have to pay for peace is your identity, or your ability to act based on your own judgments and not those of the collective hive-mind. Freedom isn’t free; peace has a price.

I am curious, what price are you willing to pay for peace? Before you answer, let me personalize that question for you. What price are you willing to pay for peace in your life right now with the people around you? I ask the question that way because I am assuming there is someone who is disturbing the peace in your life right now. I suppose it is possible that you are living in complete harmony with the world around you. But if that is true you are likely not sitting in this church this morning. It is more likely that you are stranded on a deserted island.

The vast majority of people who showed up to church this morning have conflict in their lives. Maybe it is a coworker that always finds a way to make your day miserable. Maybe it is a student that is disruptive or a teacher that is unreasonable. Maybe it is a distant relative whose Facebook posts have a way of getting under your skin. Maybe it is your parent whose inconsistent discipline and unreal expectations have you exasperated. Maybe it is your spouse. Maybe the two of you no longer see eye-to-eye, maybe you have been fighting constantly lately; maybe you are starting to think about tearing apart the one flesh? Conflicts, disputes, arguments, tensions, fights - What price are you willing to pay for peace?

In the first chapter of his letter to the Philippians, Paul has made mention of some men preaching out of envy and rivalry. Toward the end of that same chapter Paul encourages the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. In the beginning of the chapter that we are looking at today, Paul appeals to them to be like-minded, one in spirit and purpose. He cautions them against selfish ambition and vain conceit and asks that they in humility consider others better than themselves. Apparently, there were some disturbances of the peace among some of the people of Philippi.

With peace as his goal, Paul writes to all who are in the midst of a conflict, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” If you want peace in your life, you have to think like Jesus; you have to understand that peace has a price.

Jesus understood that peace had a price. On Palm Sunday we begin to see what price Jesus was willing to pay for peace. On Palm Sunday we see Jesus seated atop a colt the foal of a donkey riding into the city of Jerusalem. The prophet Zechariah encouraged the people, “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you.”1 And the people listened they “spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, ‘Hosanna!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!’ ‘Hosanna in the highest!’”2

Riding into Jerusalem with thousands of adoring fans screaming your praises does not sound like too much of a price to pay for peace. I think everyone here would be willing to pay that price right? To appreciate the price Jesus was willing to pay for peace we need to take a closer look at verse six of our text. There we are reminded that Jesus is “in very nature God.”3 Before we move on with the rest of Paul’s thought lets just let that sink in for a moment. Jesus is God, always has been, always will be. He is not just godlike. He is in His very nature God, which means the essence of His identity is deity. As God Jesus sits upon the throne of heaven while angels sing His praises. I know you know this. I only mention it again to help us understand what price Jesus was willing to pay for peace as He sat on a donkey while some sinners shouted in His direction. It helps us understand what Paul means when he writes, Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. It is not that Jesus thought of Himself as less of a God than God the Father. He knew they were equals in nature. But Jesus did not use His deity to His own advantage, personal self-advancement, and glory. Not insisting upon His own entitlements, honors, and freedom was a price Jesus was willing to pay for peace.

What price are you willing to pay for peace? You have some rights, honors, and freedoms of your own. You were created in the image of God to be the crown of creation. And even after the fall into sin, you, by the work of the Holy Spirit and sacrifice of the Son, are a child of God. You are prince and princess of the heavenly court. The devil cannot touch you because

---

1 Zechariah 9:9
2 Mark 11:8b-10
God’s angels attend you. You are beneath no man, including that man, woman, or child with whom you are in the midst of a conflict. As you think about the conflict you are having with another person, your entitlements, honors, and freedoms are not in question. The question is, are you willing to give up your entitlements, honors, and freedoms for the sake of peace? Are you willing to pay that price for peace?

Peace has a price. We learn more about the price for peace in verse seven where Paul tells us Jesus *made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.* No one could force Jesus to pay the price for peace. He had to choose to make that payment on His own. From Scripture we learn of His choice in Genesis 3:15: When God promises Adam and Eve that Jesus would become an offspring of woman. Every year we celebrate the silent night when the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. Passages like Hebrews 2:14, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil”, and other passages that say the same continue to amaze us. When God the Son became also a son of man the master became a servant. Making Himself nothing was a price Jesus was willing to pay for peace.

What price are you willing to pay for peace? Status, or how other people view us, is a powerful force. Often our words and actions are guided by the way we want people to view us. Often we associate our identity with status. We don’t like it when someone threatens our status, we don’t like it when the actions of others cause people to look at us badly, and we don’t like it when our inaction is viewed as weakness. Privilege, or that which we think we are entitled to, is an equally powerful force. Offense is only taken when someone fails to give us the respect, courtesy, or favor we believe we are entitled to. Not insisting upon your entitlements, honors, and freedoms is one thing. But making yourself nothing, making yourself a servant, sacrificing your sense of status and perceived privilege at the feet of a person you are in conflict with is arguably a greater cost. Are you willing to pay that price for peace?

Peace has a price. We learn more about the price for peace in verse eight where Paul tells us Jesus *“humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”* I mentioned the shame and humiliation associated with death on a cross last week. This week let me just say death by crucifixion has not become more dignified over the course of these past seven days. Maybe this week I would just add to what was said last week by calling your attention to Deuteronomy 21:23 where God says “*anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse.*” I don’t know that we can fully appreciate this cost, but that means God the Father was ashamed of God the Son as He hung upon the cross as the payment for sin. This too was a price Jesus was willing to pay for peace.

What price are you willing to pay for peace? You probably need to understand that if you are willing to give up your entitlements, honors, and freedoms and if you are willing to sacrifice your sense of status and perceived privileges at the feet of a person you are in conflict with, there is a very good chance you will be taken advantage of, treated unfairly, and wronged. People will laugh at you for being so naive. People will mock you for turning the other cheek. While, because of the shame Jesus endured in your place, God is not ashamed of you, many men will be. Are you willing to pay that price for peace?

Peace has a price. Jesus paid that price for you. You were the one He had a conflict with. Your sin made you hostile toward God, you did not have peace with God, and you did not want peace with God. But God wanted peace with you.

Remind yourself why Jesus was willing to pay the price for peace. Don’t misunderstand what Paul writes in verses 9-11 of our text. Jesus did not pay the price for peace so that God would exalt Him to the highest place and give Him the name that is above every name that every knee in heaven and on the earth and under the earth would bow. Jesus had all this before He paid the price for peace! These things were returned to Jesus after He paid the price for peace.

The reason Jesus paid the price for peace was because of His great love for us; it was because of His rich mercy. Jesus paid the price of peace not for His own benefit or advantage. Jesus paid the price of peace for you, for your benefit, for your advantage so that you would have peace.

Understanding that Jesus has already paid the price for your peace, I ask you once more, “what price are you willing to pay for peace?” Before you determine the price, let me just remind you of one more thing. You do not pay the price for peace so that God will exalt you, or make you a child of God, and a prince or princess of the heavenly court. You don’t pay the price for peace to earn the glories that await you in the heavenly realms. Because of Jesus you have all that now. The reason you pay the price for peace in not for your own benefit or advantage. The reason you pay the price of peace is because of what it says in 1 John 4:19, “We love because he first loved us.” You pay the price of peace for the person you are in conflict with you pay the price of peace for their benefit, you pay the price of peace for their advantage, you pay the price of peace so that they would have peace.

Freedom isn’t free; peace has a price. As we watch Jesus ride into Jerusalem to pay the price for our peace we also listen to the words of peacemaking Paul, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”. May God give you the strength to pay the price for peace in all the conflicts of your life! Amen.

---

1 Philippians 2:5-11 Palm Sunday March 29th 2015 Pastor Harmon Lewis @ Saving Grace Lutheran Church, Mobile, AL