



# Deering Community Church

Pastor: Barbara Lockett Currie

No Justice, No Peace

Sermon for 12-4-11

Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25; Luke 1:46-55

It's not so easy preaching "off lectionary": choosing my own scriptures and theme as I decided to do this Advent. As I pondered what to share with you this second Sunday in Advent, I knew right away that I wanted to speak about peace. Then it took a long time to decide what direction to go in. Finally in my reflections I asked myself, "What is the most important thing I want to share about peace?" The answer came quickly and is the title of my sermon: "No justice, no peace!!!" In 1992 I spent the year in Washington, DC—the most exciting year of my life. During that time I was involved in many marches and demonstrations, the specifics I do not remember; however, they all tended to be centered on justice and equal rights for all people, a theme you have heard preached a few times from me! I so remember the common cry, "No justice, no peace!" x3

In the Magnificat or Mary's Song, read from Luke this morning, Mary was at the beginning of her pregnancy and she was visiting her cousin Elizabeth. We heard her praising God who has done great things for her and for the world. She proclaims that God has shown strength by scattering the proud and bringing down the powerful from their thrones. God has lifted up the lowly and filled the hungry and sent the rich away. Our reading from Isaiah, written over 600 years before Christ's birth has a similar promise: "I am about to create new heavens and a new earth...I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy and its people as a delight...no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime...They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and



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eat their fruit...they shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity...The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox...They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain. (from chapter 65:vv 17-25) That sounds to me like improved health care, a good economy and the end of war, lack of conflict even amongst the animals. If we can bring into the world actions and policies that will establish justice and create the common good for all peoples, we then would have peace.

So what can we do? Is it possible for us to do anything about suffering, the suffering inside of us, our family, our community and our world? Several years ago I came across a story by John Shea titled, "Have a Defiant Christmas." Imagine, if you will, a Christmas card with three images on the cover: a bright light shining in the darkness, an evergreen in the midst of a barren forest, and a laughing child lying in a dilapidated manger. Inside the card there would be these words, "Have a Defiant Christmas." What is this all about?

The first image is quite easy to understand—whether it be a bright shining star, a candle, or even an unromantic light bulb, light will change the darkness. When we are no longer in the dark, we begin to see—both on the outside and metaphorically on the inside. The light defies the darkness.

The second image relates to the Cherokee tale I shared with the children, a story that comes in several different versions. The similarity is that the trees that show endurance or those that are kind to the animals are rewarded by the gift of staying green all year round. The evergreens are defiant. They defy losing their leaves in the winter. They refuse to be like all the other trees. They live and give us a sense of hope and life.



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The third image can be seen as the Christ Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, cared for by Mary and Joseph. The scene has the contrasting warmth of a happy child well cared for yet laid in a cold rough place where animals come to drink. Jesus is born into a cruel, violent world that will reject him and hang him on a cross. Yet the image of love and light in the Holy Family defies that rejection. There is no room in the inn, possibly a sign of Jesus' later exclusion by the religious and political elite of his time. Jesus defies this rejection from those in power and teaches and models a ministry of love and forgiveness, of healing and restoration.

Do you think this kind of Christmas card would be popular? I doubt it—it's not the sentiment of joy and love that we are use to at Christmas. The reality today, as in olden times, is that there is much darkness and lack of love and hospitality in this world. Does that mean we should not be celebrating Christmas? Do we have to wait until everything is right, violence ceased, love abounds, and all are healthy and filled with joy? Bah humbug! We must defy the darkness, the sadness, the evil in the world. "No matter how severe the outer world is—darkness, barrenness, rejection—it cannot snuff out the light, wither the greenness, or destroy the love." (Shea) If we want true peace, it is up to us to bring about justice in our land. No justice, no peace. We have to start one step at a time. What better way than to birth more peace into our inner beings. As we reflect on the birth of this special God-child in human form, remember the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible telling us that we are created in the image and likeness of God. We are united with the Holy, the Divine and with each other. I believe that joining with others in a faith community is one of the best ways to keep our hearts open to each other and to listen to how God is still speaking in our lives. I believe it is through community that we can bring about



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justice, the well being of all which will lead to peace. We are a small and mighty church here in Deering. We love it when others join with us just as the Carters, Peg Hauschildt, Jean Lewis, and Bob Santagata did this year. We also had the return of Joyce Peace, when her husband passed on after a lengthy illness. This church has a lot of love to offer and a lot of work to do. We are here to help each other search for meaning as we walk side by side. We can better defy all that tries to stop us when we bond together. No matter what is happening on the outside to try to tear us down, no matter what the circumstances are in our life that are less than perfect, we are not alone. Christ is within us and our congregation is here to walk with us. Call upon each other; let us know what's happening with you. Let us rejoice together; let us cry together; let us hold each other as we defy the stumbling blocks in our way. Then we will truly celebrate Christmas and be strengthened for the journey ahead. Hallelujah, Amen.