

Sermon for Sunday, July 19, 2009

Seventh Sunday After Pentecost

By Tim Ljunggren

First Lesson **2 Samuel 7:1-14a**
Psalm **89:20-37**
Second Lesson **Ephesians 2:11-22**
Gospel **Mark 6:30-34,53-56**

Who here this morning wants peace of mind?

Where do you find it?

Everywhere you go, you'll find people looking for peace of mind, won't you? I've talked with enough parents of young children—and I remember my own experiences as well—to know that one fond wish is a quiet place, a place of peace, and that for many, not even the bathtub is a safe haven. And I've known parents who desire peace from worry about their adolescent children, and couples who long for peace between each other. I've visited with an older man who prays for peace, a final respite from the pain of cancer which is overcoming him. I've talked with an alienated daughter who wishes to make peace with her father, but doesn't know how.

You know them, too—so many people, crying out for peace.

Quite possibly, you yourselves and people you love are longing for peace: longing for peace in mind and in heart and in body, in relationships, in the workplace, city, nation, and world. In comparison to the size of some of these peoples' wants, the disciples' desire for a little "down time"—for a time of rest and quiet—seems quite trivial. Yet, however small, this yearning and pining we all have is quite real.

Sometimes, we settle for a piecemeal peace.

That's about the best it seems we humans can do at times.

Here and there, by some miracle of good-heartedness, we see reconciliation, healing, harmony. But so often in our world, we use the word "peace" to mean a

lack of visible conflict, where hatred and mistrust simmers beneath the surface. All we can know is the “Pax Romana” type of peace, a peace enforced by threats of destruction, personal attacks, cold war, frozen chances. We keep the peace by exiting scenes of potential conflict, or by pointing fingers, or by glossing over relationships in favor of our own personal agendas.

Piecemeal peace. Pretender peace.

But God’s peace is of a very different sort. It’s that peace which surpasses all human understanding. It is, first off, a pure gift, that for which we long for from the marrow of our bones, that fundamental rightness with ourselves, each other, and God—it’s a way that we keep discovering what the world cannot give to us. It’s a strange peace, a disruptive peace, a peace that often demands suffering, conflict, the pouring-out of self, all in the likeness of Jesus, who won our peace by his blood, who gave himself on a cross, uniting us and mending us from our brokenness.

The Eucharist is a celebration of the peace won by Jesus’ cross, our place of rest. Here we, like the disciples, come apart for awhile; here we, like the disciples, are taught by Jesus, fed by Jesus, and given refreshment, guidance, and support by Jesus. But, as the disciples learned, the respite is all too short—for we are all challenged. Our God who is rest is also restless. There is work to be done in a world where so many people are crying out for peace. As the sign of our Christian call to unity, we share the sign of peace he offered to his disciples after the resurrection, that wonderful blessing of communion with God, world, neighbor, and self continually wrought by the Spirit who dwells among us. As a sign of God’s gift of unity, we share the living bread and saving cup. Jesus’ gift - the Eucharist - is a banquet of peace which both fills us and makes us hungry: hungry enough to keep praying for the gift, hungry enough to keep striving for peace among ourselves.

Let us go forth, to bring in word and in deed the voice and the embrace of our peacemaker God.

Amen. ...