

God's Many-Layered Peace

This week's reflection comes from two directions. The first is the Easter greeting of Jesus recorded in John 20, 'Peace be with you', which were the words he used on Easter Day itself and a week later when he met Thomas. The other impetus for my thinking is the discussion around the American / Israeli attack on Iran, where the Pope has quietly but publicly shared the Christian call for peace – political peace – in contrast to God being invoked as the God of war.

In our Stilling Prayer on Monday evenings we go deep into the peace of God, but I think it's also true that we open ourselves so that the peace of God comes deeply into us. We think of Jesus' words: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you (John 14.27), and pray that, simply being held by God, we become as peaceful as a small child being held in one of their parents' arms. The peace experienced by the small child and by the Christian believer comes from trust. We can trust God to be there for us. One of the results of knowing God's peace deep within us is that we become at peace with ourselves.

Most of us have probably found that trusting deeply in God – being secure and peaceful in the arms of a loving Creator – doesn't always stop us being agitated or hurt. We love and believe Jesus' words: 'My peace I give to you', but it doesn't always FEEL like that. We can find ourselves getting angry about quite small things, as well as about the unjust and war-like goings-on in the wider world. We can lose our inner equilibrium.

But the thing about God is that we can always come back to him. When we have let Him build up that inner peace within us, it remains there quietly but persistently. We have seen that quiet and confident peace in Pope Leo in recent weeks, persistently reminding world leaders of Jesus' words: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' God's inner peace is a fact rather than a feeling. We pray that people in power will have peace with God, leading to peace with themselves, leading in turn to peace with the rest of humanity.

Jesus said, 'Peace be with you' (Luke 24.36) when he met his followers on the first Easter Day. His peace is there for us 2000 years later, in our life-long project to keep ourselves open for Him to work His peace within us.

Leading into the silence a poem by Janet Morley, from '*All Desires Known*' SPCK, 1992

and you held me and there were no words
and there was no time and you held me
and there was only wanting and
being held and being filled with wanting
and I was nothing but letting go
and being held
and there were no words and there
needed to be no words
and there was no terror only stillness
and I was wanting nothing and
it was fullness and it was like aching for God
and it was touch and warmth and
darkness and no time and no words and we flowed
and I flowed and I was not empty
and I was given up to the dark and
in the darkness I was not lost
and the wanting was like the fullness and I could

hardly hold it and I was held and
you were dark and warm and without time and
without words and you held me.

Leading from the silence

God, it seems that every time we turn on the news, the world gets a little worse each day. We know sin has ravaged this planet and that the world will lack complete peace until you return. Nevertheless, we ask that you intervene in the world and grant us peace. Help us to find more ways to love our neighbours and show the world your goodness. Amen.