

As we were driving back from our vacation in Utah, we passed through small towns on the way. They were not too different from the small towns we see in California. We saw the same franchise restaurants, gas stations, and advertisements. One of the signs on the side of the road listed a brand-new townhouse at \$28,500. \$28,500? I had to look once more, as I drove, because I thought I misread. It should have been \$285,000. No, I read it correctly the first time: there were only two zeroes. In the next town, St. George, known as the retirement town for Utahans, the town house price was a lot higher, at \$32,500.

I could not believe my eyes. These houses are priced cheaper than an SUV! I could not help thinking about how the house prices are here in California. Even the so-called affordable housing costs 10 times more. The housing prices are way overinflated here in CA. And it did contribute to the severity of the housing market collapse from which we are trying to recover.

And it has caused such griefs to many working families.

A house is not just a dwelling, but also an investment. It is expected to serve as the resource to finance the future, and is the symbol of the dream fulfilled. It is also where the fondest of the memories are born. It provides the sense of security—physical, emotional, and financial. It is the integral part of family life. Many watched their dreams shatter, however, when their houses foreclosed.

Losing one's house is not the only thing that robs peace from our hearts. Losing jobs, failing businesses, and lost investments greatly affect our psyche, and create stresses.

Then there are relational problems we experience with one another. Bad working conditions, bad bosses and coworkers cause great stress and anguish. There is a plenty of friction between the spouses, between the parents and children, and between friends. That is not all. What about our

bodily illnesses? If we are healthy, what about watching and caring for our loved ones who are infirm, stricken with illnesses? These things constantly assault us and rob from us the sense of peace.

These things take away our sense of peace, but there is one thing that we cannot touch with our hands, yet takes away our sense of peace, nevertheless. This thing takes away the worth of being from us. It reduces our worth as human beings. It is called prejudice—prejudice against gender, age, sexual orientation, race, class, status, nationality, etc. Prejudice affects our psyche deeply, and it creates the social structure that oppresses and reduces one's being.

Which one robs us the sense of peace more, the state deficit of more than 26 billion dollars, or the arguments that there should not be any tax increase nor service cuts, in spite of such a deficit?

Then there are crimes from which we cannot protect ourselves, and wars that negate all sense of security, achievement, and hope. Worse, there are looming threats from the random terrorists that are getting more real day by day.

What could restore the sense of peace, when we know fully well that things are not going to change soon, or that things are going to be worse? What could make a difference in our troubled lives, when we know we cannot avoid the challenges of life that threaten our happiness and prosperity?

And what could Jesus possibly do to give this "peace" to us? Can he give the foreclosed their houses back, their lost jobs back, heal their illnesses and their separated wives, husbands, and children back? Can he lower the taxes while increase the benefits, break the legs of the criminals and the arms of the warmongers, and annihilate the terrorists? Is this why regular people go to church?

I am certain that there are believers who believe that Jesus could do all of the above. But I doubt that Jesus has the connection with the lawmakers, the military, and the business leaders to make peace happen the way these believers wish.

One problem with this sort of peace is that it benefits only one side. When we think about it, this peace always had the costly side to it. In order for one group to enjoy it, another group has to pay with their rights, resources, and the future. Every single war effort is exactly of the kind. We wage war, in order to achieve peace, but at the cost of the other whom we have labeled, "the enemy." How any loser will agree with the reign of such a peace is beyond me. Maybe that is why Jesus taught us to love our enemies.

And a war rarely works out as neatly as planned. Even when one side wins, the winner has lost something significant and precious in the process—not only one's resources and the human

lives, but one's humanity, as well. These losses cannot be camouflaged with the medals of honor, or with the pompous ceremonies. No matter how noble the cause, a war robs them their humanity. Was Jesus talking about this kind of peace, the kind that forces the other to pay for the expense of one's peace?

Isn't it why there is the cycle of war, because the other side has been forced to pay for the expense of our peace and prosperity? Who would not like to get back at those who made you pay? Germany was made to pay humiliating reparation after the WWI. Soon the WWII followed, when a demagogue stirred up the nation's thirst for the revenge and the restoration of honor.

Perhaps Jesus was talking about the peace that is achieved by a different way. Peace that everyone can enjoy, peace that does not force the other to pay for one's expense of it.

What if there is peace that is not affected by external events? Peace that is not achieved at some one else's expense? That is the peace Jesus is talking about: the peace that Jesus gives is not as the world gives.

This peace dwells internally, in our spirits. It transforms our character, our outlook, and our aspiration. This peace knows of no prejudice, or self-interest. This peace seeks to include everyone in its benefit. This peace seeks to benefit every living being.

It may appear to a rational human being that such a peace will have no chance of taking root in this world choked with crisscrossing self interests and hatred. Yet that is God's plan. It may appear that only few will be saved in this sinful world, yet God sent Jesus into this world. It is God's will that everyone be saved (I Tim 2:3, 4), including the kings and all who are in high positions who are responsible for waging war. For this reason the writer of the I Timothy urged the

believers to make "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings" for them, so that they could live in peace.

Perhaps people have been practicing only the peace that the world gives. Because of this war-spawning peace which our fellow human beings have been practicing, we need God's help in making peace. Without God's guidance, our effort to make peace will be confined to the age-old formula, the peace as the world knows it: our peace, happiness, and prosperity at the expense of the other.

I saw a bumper sticker the other day. It read: I am already against the next war. As long as we keep and practice this formula, there will always be the next war, and no matter how opposed to the next war we may already have been, it is inevitable.

According to Jesus, however, we already have this peace with us. We are the disciples of Jesus. God counts on us to make peace possible. God's guidance comes

St. Andrew's UMC
May 9th, 2010
John 14:23-29
"Peace I Leave With You"

through the Holy Spirit, the
Advocate, whom God sent to us.
The Holy Spirit will teach us
everything and remind us of all
that Jesus has said.

Come, Holy Spirit, Come!