My thought

PEACE IN THE CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE

September 22, 2019, Sunday

Blessed are the Peacemakers

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'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are called the sons of God'. Rom 12:18 says, 'if possible, be peaceable with all men.' The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of peace. The word '**peace**' is used in the **Bible** 429 **times** in KJV - the first occurrence is (Genesis 15:15) 'And thou shalt go to thy fathers in **peace**; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.' Cf. Romans 14:19; James 3:18; John 14:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:13.

In today's disorderly context, there is every kind of violence locally and globally,from world war to terrorism (ideologically motivated terrorist attacks), inter-community strife, linguistic chauvinism, incidence of hostilities motivated by religious hatred, as well as every day conflicts between neighbours, Domestic violence, Sexual Violence (Assault/Abuse), Child Abuse, Youth and Dating Violence, Stalking, Elder Abuse, Technology-Assisted Abuse etc. Children, teenagers, and adults are addicted to spending most of their time playing violent video games. Today, the fashion statement of youth is 'being and becoming violent'. These days kids toys come in the guise of toy guns, archery sets, action figures, war toys, etc. Violence is marketed in the guise of entertainment at every corner. Social media users can be manipulated by misinformation, which in turn can lead to violence between different groups. There are always attempts to foment a cycle of retribution.

Today's scripture portions have utmost significance considering present violent situations in individual lives, family, church, society, and politics.

In a few portions of the OT and NT, Peace is a multidimensional concept that can be viewed through the lens of both **negative peace** and **positive peace**. **Positive peace**: Structural integration, Optimistic, Preventive, **Peace** by **peaceful** means. **Negative Peace**: Absence of violence, Pessimistic, Curative, **Peace** not always by **Peaceful** means. In the scripture, **Positive peace** is the presence of social justice and equality, and the absence of structural or indirect violence. It is characterized by the presence of the Divine, harmonious social relations, and the 'integration of human society'.

Let us look into today's scripture portions as a driving force and derive peace-making strategies in the context of violence.



Peace as the capacity to handle conflict - 1 Sam 24: 1-12

We either know people we have a hard time loving, or we know people who have a hard time loving us or both. Jesus said, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you' (Matt.5:44). The question is not whether or not we have enemies. The issue is whether or not we will love and pursue them at great cost to ourselves. In this passage. Saul displayed his own fear, paranoia, and jealousy toward David. David acts in humility and courage in how he handles Saul's opposition. This story is a wonderful example of what it means to pursue our enemies and live out the truth. Three truths that can help all of us resolve the conflict between us and those who may oppose us. **I: Resist harming those who oppose You (vv. 4-7); II: Make the first move to reconcile (vv. 8-15); III: Agree to do each other good (vv. 16-22).** David is not a perfect model always. However, his actions here defines peace as the *capacity* to handle conflicts with empathy, creativity and through non-violent means.



What is peace work? - Mt 5: 38-48

Peace workers can try to modify any of the attitude, behaviour, and content/contradiction of violence. They can try to increase 'negative peace' (by simply preventing, reducing, or stopping violence), increase 'positive peace' (by promoting direct, structural, and cultural peace), and transform issues in a non-violent way and constructive mass action.

'If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?...And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others?'. Jesus, as a model, promised that He would give us His peace (John 14:27). In **Mt 5: 38-48**, **JESUS TAUGHT US** some basic concepts of peace work. He defines peace not merely as the absence of violence, but as a positive state or condition of harmony. It is determined by doing no injury, loving, caring, and harmonious acts which elicit the good in each other (direct peace), by fair and horizontal relationships (structural peace), and by a culture of peace (cultural peace). Peace in this text can be seen as a *driving force* to deal with life challenges in a positive way. Jesus demonstrated the peace model on the cross, the embodiment of God's love (Rom. 5: 8; John 13:34, 35; Luke 10: 25-37; Matt. 5: 46,47; Matt. 5: 38-48).



Peace as a state of complete harmony - Rom 12: 14-21

'Live in harmony with one another'. In a social sense, **peace** is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or heterogeneous (relatively foreign or distinct) groups. **Peace and harmony** can bring **peaceful** and stable order to church and society, and they are a necessary condition for the survival and development of people. For instance, Joseph, when rose up to high

position in Egypt, did good to his brothers who did evil to him. Instead of exacting revenge, Joseph reconciles with his brothers and restores family unity by extending forgiveness. (Gen. 45:1-15). Joseph's **Peacebuilding** as an activity aims to **resolve** injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the conditions that generate deadly or destructive **violence**. A world deprived of **peace and harmony** certainly will fall apart and return to the jungle era in which the strong prey on the weak. In Romans 12:21 we find an admonition **'as far as possible be at peace with everybody'.** Do well instead of evil. This is called walking another mile.

The gospel of peace is the need of the hour. Peace can be both a state of mind (internal), as well as a state of society (external).

PEACE (IN THE **BIBLE**) the Hebrew word for **peace**, *šālôm*, translated in the Septuagint most often by the Greek word, *eirēnē*, has a wide semantic range including the notions of totality or completeness, success, fulfillment, wholeness, harmony, security and well being. **Peace** in the OT, the word has meanings such as freedom, perfection, and well-being. Peace is a happy state of mind that does not stumble even under adverse circumstances.

Shalom is also used when praying for the well-being of another person (Gen. 43:27; Exodus 4:18; Judges 19:20) and when referring to one's fellowship with another (1 Kings 5:12). Likewise, physical security is also called security and peace (Psalm 4: 8). Peace is the gift of God and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The Messiah's reign is a time of peace (Isa. 2: 2,4; 11: 1-9; Hag. 2: 7-9). Be at peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you (2 Corinthians 13:11). God has called us to live in peace (1 Corinthians 7:15). The New Testament teaches us to be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50).

The biggest source of violence is man's ego, the sense of selfhood pitted against all other-selves. One's self or ego depends upon its level of identification, first with one's family, and later on with one's community, howsoever that community may be defined.

Firstly, in Indian thought, the most fundamental value is ***ahimsa* or non-violence**. Secondly, the **remedy lies in perceiving and emphasizing our commonalities, affinity to each other, impartiality and friendliness, as well as our interdependence.**

#A prayer of St. Francis of Assisi: 'Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy'.

HAVE A PEACEFUL SUNDAY!