Peace Moment by Claudia Schooler, Prayer for Peace by Steve Bolie

    The pursuit of peace is often about noticing where peace is absent. Today’s scripture reminds us that sometimes it’s simply about accepting the invitation to come and be blessed.

    “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.” (Luke 13:34, NRSV) These words of Jesus were recorded after Jesus had been teaching, sharing parables and after he was again reprimanded by Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath. The image of the hen and her chicks is endearing. But hear also the longing, even exasperation in Jesus’ words: “How often have I desired to gather you . . . and you were not willing.”

    There is a mindset among us humans that everything must be according to the rules; that we must earn everything we receive, even love; and that often we must prove our worthiness through suffering before we deserve joy.

    My husband comes from a long line of farmers. He tells how as a youngster before he was allowed to tinker with the equipment or drive the tractor, he had to trudge through the soybean fields hand cutting thistles with a hoe. It’s as if it was a rite of passage he had to endure to prove himself worthy of more enjoyable jobs. This farmer mindset is generational. When our daughters were preteens, an echo from the past was heard again. “If you want to have fun at grandma’s house, you have to cut all the thistles in this field first.” I walked the beans with them – and walked and walked. The thistles were scattered widely over the acres. The sun was hot and the leaves of the plants made our legs itch. We did our best, but at some point it dawned pon me that this was no way to make the girls love farming. We shut the door on that rite of passage. Fortunately love for the farm prevailed and both daughters still take joy in the land.

    There are parallel rites of passage in congregational life. A new family comes to church. Right away we think we have to give them a job so they’ll stay. Put them on the building committee. Ask them to organize potluck. Get them to teach Sunday school, Add them to the church cleaning rotation.

    The French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery said, “If you want to build a ship...don’t drum up the people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”

    If you want them to love farming, let them plant flowers and feed baby calves, and explore the back forty with their imaginations. If you want them to love the congregation, be willing to listen to their stories,  invite them to dinner, and find occasion to laugh and play and sing. If you want them to love Jesus, tell them to come, just be willing to come in under the warmth and protection of his wings of peace.

Let us join our hearts in a prayer for peace.

Growing God,

In your continuing work of creation you make a place for humans to plant, cultivate and harvest. You created in them, in us, the desire to join your work in growing - plants, animals, children, love of Jesus, shalom, and the list goes on. We thank you for the opportunities to participate in your creative processes.

You also stir in us the desire for peace, in our best moments, for cooperation over conflict, unity over division, to recognize the worth of persons in all our diversity. May this difficult time stir within all people the vision of the peace of Jesus. May that vision cause nations and people to seek and follow pathways of peace. And may we all dwell in the warmth and protection of the wings of Jesus’ peace. Amen.