

Peace Moment for August 7, 2022
Rescue the Oppressed

Peace Moment

Our theme for tonight calls for us to “rescue the oppressed!” Rather a tall order! Our scripture from Isaiah makes no illusion that this is merely a suggestion or a “wouldn’t it be nice if…” or “when you get around to it…” type of directive. No, it’s a straightforward command.

A bit earlier in our scripture from Isaiah, God suggests that the people had been trying to appeal to God’s good nature by continuing some of their old behaviors such as bringing offerings, burning incense, offering solemn prayers and performing rites. We continue to do the same sort of things but in a modern context. It’s so much easier to perform a rite over and over than it is to perform an act of kindness or generosity to a continuing line of people in need of peace.

Perhaps, like those who Isaiah dealt with, I get caught up in the process of rationalizing how much or how little effort I want to take to meet the *letter* of the law when I should be addressing what I need to do to meet the *spirit* of the law. For example, rather than spending actual time volunteering at any number of organizations that help people, I donate money. Not a bad thing, but if it’s just a way to feel I’ve “checked the box,” perhaps not! Another example might be that I send a card or note in the mail to let people know I’m thinking of them, but I don’t always let myself be available in person to just listen or drink tea or take a walk. This allows me to delude myself that I’m being authentic. Dealing with people in person can be messy and complicated but can also be illuminating and comforting.

In this scripture, God wanted to release us from the rituals that let us believe we were fulfilling our end of the covenant bargain. But those rituals also let us shirk our part in the hard work of relationship building – both with God and others. Getting credit for doing mindless things wasn’t, and still isn’t, going to cut it! We are expected to grow into a more mature relationship that is *transformational* and not *transactional*! Only then will be authentic bringers of peace.

Meditation Questions

1. Can you identify one rite or ritual that you might use to substitute for active service?
2. What one act of service could you substitute for that rite or ritual?

Prayer for Peace

O God, you are present in and around and through all things.

You command us to

Cease to do evil,
Learn to do good,
Seek justice,
Rescue the oppressed,
Defend the orphan, and
Plead for the widow.

Give us strength to

Speak the truth,
Recognize the good in others,
Offer opportunities,
Liberate those in need,
Challenge biases, and
Support human dignity.

Use us to provide transformation

From discord to harmony,
From disappointment to joy,
From dejection to hope,
From tribalism to unity,
From indifference to love, and
From confusion to peace.

Amen.