

Advent Devotional December 9, 2024

Weekly theme: Peace

Scripture

Psalm 67

*1 May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah
2 that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.
3 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. Selah
5 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
6 The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
7 May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.*

Devotion

The Rev. Lisa J. Lyon '92

In seven verses, the Psalmist uses “us” four times, “peoples” five times, “nations” three times, “all” four times, combined into “all the nations”, “all the peoples” and “all the ends of the earth.” When a Hebrew word or phrase is repeated, we need to pay attention. This message is important to our understanding of God and ourselves.

In Psalm 67, God’s saving power is for all nations. God’s blessing is for all peoples. God judges the peoples, guides the nations. In response to God’s inclusive love and care, all peoples and all nations are invited to praise God together. Perfect peace!

If God’s graciousness, blessing, salvation, judgment and guidance are all-inclusive, why are peoples and nations so exclusive? In America, Native Americans were excluded from their land. Others were excluded from our country, our neighborhoods, our schools, our churches, and our laws. From 1875 on, immigration law limited or banned Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Polish, Russian, Asian Pacific, Latin American, African and Southeast European peoples. Also at times Jews, Muslims, Arabs, and women traveling alone. African Americans and women were excluded from voting, education, jobs, property ownership. Cities and towns were divided by ethnicity, national origin, religion, class.

Such exclusiveness once gave way to the Christmas spirit. It wasn’t peace, but a temporary cease-fire—a tenuous truce as people put aside their differences in an outburst of civility, charity, friendliness. At least until December 26.

I worry that the Christmas spirit will not be manifest at all this year. How can we welcome the Christ Child who came for all if we exclude members of “the other” political party, the LGBTQ community,

refugees, immigrants, authors, naturalized citizens—anyone whose ideas, faith or politics are different from ours?

We can't.

Sisters and brothers, let us repent, and embrace and share God's all-inclusive love!

Prayer

God who created all people in your image and likeness, God who loves everyone everywhere: thank you. You sent your Son, the embodiment of your all-inclusive love. As we welcome baby Jesus, so may we welcome people you send our way with open minds, open hearts, and open hands. Amen.