

Living in Harmony (Peace) ~ December 5, 2010: Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12; Psalm 72:1-1, 18-19

I remember, from days gone by, asking my mother what it was she would like for Christmas. The answer always was, "Peace and quiet." As I have gotten older, I realize the importance of this gift. Who among us would not like a little peace and quiet?

But, it seems, peace is a difficult commodity to come by. With Wikileaks surrounding us, that seem intent on stirring up ill will and ugly feelings in our world, and with people who seem always to enjoy stirring the pot for their own egos and gain, peace often slips by the boards.

This happens because, too often, we lose sight of what it is that unites humanity and seek to find those things that divide us. As long as we do this, we will not find times of lasting peace within our selves and our world. Will there ever be a time when we can live in some sort of harmony?

As I wrote this, I kept thinking of that song, "Ebony and Ivory" which was popular many years ago. Remember the words? They are:

*Ebony and Ivory live together in perfect harmony
Side by side on my piano keyboard, o lord, why don't we?
We all know that people are the same wherever we go
There is good and bad in everyone,
We learn to live, we learn to give
Each other what we need to survive together alive.*

This song puzzled over why it is we just cannot set aside our differences and manage to begin to work toward a common goal of peace on earth. Why can we not bend enough to see what is needed by our fellow humans to create a new way of living and moving and having our beings? Perhaps, it is our need for self-satisfaction and preservation that keeps us from opening our eyes and our hearts to those around us.

The prophet Isaiah seemed to think we could move toward peace, when he spoke of the coming time when the lion would lie down with the lamb and all would be well in God's kingdom. Paul spoke of the need for harmonious living between the Jews and Gentiles in the church in Rome. It was the only way the people in that little church would survive. They needed to accept one another as they were and then simply move forward beyond drawing lines that separate. And, our reading about John the Baptist, while focusing on his ability to stir things up, also pointed to the prospect of all things coming together for those who believed in the one who was to come.

We know what it is we need to do to lead peaceful lives. We need to discover ways to make peace within ourselves, to know that we are the beloved children of God and to understand that no matter how others might try to diminish us, we are just as good as anyone else. This can be very difficult for some of us to understand, but we are all equally loved and cherished by a God who accepts us where we are in life and who we are. Only when we can make peace within ourselves can we turn outward and offer it to

others. A non-peaceful soul can destroy relationships instead of working on building them.

When we can begin to focus on what is good and true and pure, the light of God begins to shine more brightly in us and through us and we come to understand that life is not a game of one-up-mans-ship or a battle to be won. It is to be engaged in its fullness with hope and peace, joy and love. The greatest of which is love, our fourth Advent candle. When we can give love to those around us, even those we might find it difficult to love from time to time, everything changes. We find peace.

This brought me to another song by Michael Ball, a tiny portion of which is:

*Love, love changes everything
Hands and faces, earth and sky.
Love, love changes everything
How you live and how you die.*

.....
*Love will turn your world around
And that world will last forever.
Yes, love, love changes everything
Nothing in the world will ever be the same.*

When we are able to see the world in new ways, from a peaceful center and through loving hearts and minds, nothing will ever be the same. That is the message Jesus brought us using far different words. It was a message of transformation of our very selves and then of the world. We wait during these weeks of Advent for the light to come forth once more, and through it glows the love that leads to peace and changes everything.

~ *Amen*

Lyrics to "Love, Love Changes Everything" I think Andrew Lloyd Webber had a hand in this, too.

Love, love changes everything,
Hands and faces, earth and sky
Love, love changes everything
How you live and how you die
Love, can make the summer fly,
Or a night seem like a lifetime
Yes, love, love changes everything,
Now I tremble at your name
Nothing in the world will ever be the same.

Love, love changes everything,

Days are longer, words mean more
Love, love changes everything,
Pain is deeper than before
Love, will turn your world around,
And that world will last forever
Yes, love, love changes everything
Brings you glory, brings you shame
Nothing in the world will ever be the same.

Off into the world we go,
Planning futures, shaping years
Love bursts in and suddenly
All our wisdom disappears
Love, makes fools of everyone
All the rules we make are broken
Yes, love, love changes everyone,
Live or perish in its flame
Love will never, never let you be the same
Love will never, never let you be the same.