

**“Lions and Lambs,
Loving and Longing for Peace”**

Isaiah 11:1-10

December 8, 2019; 10:00 am
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
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A Green Shoot from Jesse’s Stump

11 ¹⁻⁵A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse’s stump,
from its roots a budding Branch.
The life-giving Spirit of God will hover over him,
the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit that gives direction and builds strength,
the Spirit that instills knowledge and Fear-of-God.
Fear-of-God
will be all his joy and delight.
He won’t judge by appearances,
won’t decide on the basis of hearsay.
He’ll judge the needy by what is right,
render decisions on earth’s poor with justice.
His words will bring everyone to awed attention.
A mere breath from his lips will topple the wicked.
Each morning he’ll pull on sturdy work clothes and boots,
and build righteousness and faithfulness in the land.

A Living Knowledge of God

⁶⁻⁹The wolf will romp with the lamb,
the leopard sleep with the kid.
Calf and lion will eat from the same trough,
and a little child will tend them.
Cow and bear will graze the same pasture,
their calves and cubs grow up together,
and the lion eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child will crawl over rattlesnake dens,
the toddler stick his hand down the hole of a serpent.
Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill
on my holy mountain.
The whole earth will be brimming with knowing God-Alive,
a living knowledge of God ocean-deep, ocean-wide.
¹⁰On that day, Jesse’s Root will be raised high, posted as a
rallying banner for the peoples. The nations will all come to
him. His headquarters will be glorious.

I. PEACE OF MIND AND SO MUCH MORE

A beautiful scripture passage in the season of Advent.
One of my favorites! And, at the perfect time. A time
when our hearts are longing for *shalom*, for peace and
wholeness, healing and justice for all of God’s
children. For “shalom” means so much more than “a
peaceful, easy feeling.”

SHALOM:

Shalom means “to be safe in mind, body, or estate.” It resonates a sense of completeness, fullness, or a type of wholeness that encourages you to give back—to generously re-pay something in some way.

peace, harmony, wholeness,, prosperity, well-being and tranquility and can be used idiomatically to mean both *hello* and *goodbye*.

It can refer to either peace between two entities (especially between man and God or between two countries), or to the well-being, welfare or safety of an individual or a group of individuals.

During Advent, we look forward to this peace, this shalom—a kind of “holy wholeness.” We wait on Lord, seek the fulfillment of the promises of God, when all things will be made right.

We look back to the wise words of the ancient prophets and sing out our longing in song. We read it, too, as followers of Jesus, the One who was full of power yet extended mercy toward the most vulnerable and healing toward the broken, the powerful and wise One who was humble even so.

We listen, during this time of waiting, reflecting on what we yearn for most in our hearts, and what we are doing to prepare for the fulfillment of those hopes.

II. WHAT PEACE LOOKS LIKE IN THE BIBLE

What does peace look like in the Bible? In this “Realm of God—the Kingdom” we hear so much about? It looks like all sorts of creatures lying down together that were previously foes, or dangerous to one another—predator and prey. And children playing among them!

Traditionally, “lions and lambs lying down together” has been the poetic description of the Peaceable Kingdom (or “Kin-dom” a more fitting name). Here’s a little puzzle for you (homework!): where in the Bible does it say the lion lies down with the lamb?

Our scripture that Jean read actually says:

⁶⁻⁹ The wolf will romp with the lamb,
the leopard sleep with the kid.

Calf and lion will eat from the same trough,
and a little child will tend them.

It’s kind of like a little algebra problem ☺. If A lies down with B, and B shares a trough with C, then A plays nicely with C!

A good example of how splitting hairs loses the point!

III. OF LIONS AND LAMBS

The question for us to ponder today is this: What does it take for the lion to lie down with the lamb? For us to bring the Peaceable Kingdom into our midst? With *whatever* creatures we might want to choose?!

For us to find peace, in our own lives and in our circles in community, lions and lambs—in all their moods and aspects, have to come *together* in new and sometimes challenging ways. It might be a stretch! But, both, all, must come, in a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation, casting aside their innate habits and previous roles of predator and prey.

All must be willing to consider a new way of being and relating. Not looking for someone to attack and eat, or to run and hide from!

Remember Aslan in the Narnia series? A great and powerful Lion, yet *soft of paw and voice*, as he walks and talks with Lucy?

In order to find peace in ourselves, we must consider that each of us is a lamb sometimes and a lion at others. And, that we are called into those roles by Spirit—it's not a default setting. On the path of life in community and faith, we are constantly choosing, in this moment: “Am I called to be a lion or a lamb?”

And, then, we must discern, in that moment how best to *express* our “lioness” and our “lambness”!

For sometimes, a lamb is silent and following obediently. Sometimes that obedience is good—we work and live together in the flock, peaceably, going with the flow, moving in the groove, following the Good Shepherd as best we are able.

Other times, we need *not* to follow blindly, but to bleat expectantly! Have you ever heard a sheep pen at supertime? My sister and brother-in-law have just a few sheep, but the second you turn up the driveway—a *long* ways from the barn!—anytime after 3:00 in the afternoon, you hear a ruckus! I always feel scolded; even if it's not my task to feed them.

Some days we are called to raise a ruckus. To be those bleating lambs. Not always following blindly and obediently.

We are also lions at times. We might be called to roar—not unlike the bleating lambs—when harm is happening (or hunger!) to our fellow creatures (fellow humans); or to our planet—our home. To speak up for those who have no voice, or whose voice is not heard or listened to.

And, like the Lion of Advent, we also have times, when reaching for the peaceable kingdom together, we need to *quiet* the roaring, pull the claws in and look at others differently—with new eyes and hearts. To look at one another in a new light—where there have been natural differences and dividing lines between us before.

We must figure out a way to lie down together. To come to the Table, from our different experiences, expectations and perspectives—not giving up our true selves, but living out of those selves in new ways. In a new spirit. Peace with action. Radical peace. Wholeness--shalom. So much more than a “peaceful, easy feeling.”

Peacemaking doesn't mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evildoer, the act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight but the careful, arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice. It is about a revolution of

love that is big enough to set both the oppressed and the oppressors free.”

– Shane Claiborne, *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*

IV. PEACEFUL RESOLUTION

What do you need, today, to usher in a “revolution of love?” What do you bring to the Manger, come to Jesus with, that brings peace into your life and the world?

What does the “Peaceable Kin-dom” look like in your life? What lions do you need to lay down at the manger? What timid lambs inside you need courage to bleat? To trust enough to venture out and make peace in relationships that formerly were in conflict or not safe? What courage do you need to find, in your own circle, to believe the Peaceable Kindom—God’s Family on earth—is even possible? Or at least striving for?

CLOSING Prayer

O Come, Lord Jesus, Come as you already are. Give me the grace to hear you. Give me the strength to perceive you. Give me the courage to welcome you. Give me the endurance to pay attention to your roar.

