

## Dec. 6 – Small Group Questions – Advent 3 - Peace

### Read Psalm 85

1. The biblical definition of peace is multifaceted and it can mean wholeness or completeness. In verses 1-7 of Psalm 85, what are some of the elements of peace on which the psalmist touched?

*In this psalm, peace looks like being restored physically into one's home country, to be secure and stable politically and economically. This can also mean to be whole in regards to physical health, wellbeing, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Also, peace means to be forgiven of sin, to have God's favour and blessings in life, to inherit and experience God's salvation.*

2. In verses 8-9, the psalmist calls to mind the time when God was close to His people and when His voice could be heard as in the days of Moses. How do we feel God's presence in our lives and hear His voice in our present times?

*While it would be an exceptional experience to encounter God in a supernatural way, we can daily encounter God through the words of Scripture, in prayer, in fellowship with His people, in all the goodness of life, and even in the pain, suffering, darkness, loneliness, and silence that we will experience in life. We must be careful to measure and discern God's voice from all other voices--whether human or the voices or influence of other spirits--by the standard of God's revealed word in the Bible and within community, that is, in community with other faithful Christians and in concert with the history and tradition of the Church worldwide. Interpretation and discernment of Scripture and of God's will can be fraught but also fulfilling. Always navigate matters of spiritual discernment in community, according to history, and with patience and with time. Never rush into any conclusion immediately and just on your own, and never based on fringe ideas.*

3. In verses 10-13, the psalmist imagined peace as a reunion of all virtue on earth as in the time of original creation in Eden. Peace is the enmeshing and weaving together of heaven and earth. While peace in this sense is God's divine work, how and in what ways can we participate in God's work of peace on earth?

*We are called to witness to the Gospel of peace on earth in word and deed. We can be involved by giving fiscally, volunteering, promoting, or working at the frontlines in any worthwhile cause for justice, mercy, and peace. But we must not bear upon ourselves the illusion and the undue burden of "weaving" the earth and its institutions and structures alongside heaven. We will be sorely disillusioned by failure, by hypocrisy, by dead-ends, and we will be crushed by the weight of our own expectations. Only God is unstoppable, strong enough to bear the weight of infinite expectations, and He is the One who will ultimately weave heaven and earth together. And we come alongside Him to first witness*

*to His already-at-work in the world, and then to secondly, join His hands to work out justice, mercy, and peace wherever we are called to.*

4. **Read John 14:25-27.** Jesus leaves His peace with us in the form of the Holy Spirit. God's peace begins within us when God weaved Himself into our hearts and bodies. How does this truth change and inform our understanding and mission as peacemakers in the world?

*The Holy Spirit is the only One who empowers us to be peacemakers because we have each been made at peace personally with God by the same Spirit. Being at peace with God means we have become agents of His peace--peacemakers--in the world through the same peace of the Spirit within us. And so, the work of peace in our lives and in our world is shaped by the commands, instructions, and remembrance of Jesus as found in Scripture. We as Christians can align and collaborate with all the good works, policies, agencies, and techniques of the world that complement God's peace for all. The uniqueness of Christian peacemaking is that we are first witnesses and ambassadors with the clear message of the Gospel--calling individuals to repent of sin, to turn away from sin, to turn to Jesus for forgiveness, and to trust in Jesus.*