

“The Miracle Season: Dreams of Peace”  
Joel 2:12-13, 28-29

While thinking of the theme of peace for this fourth Sunday of Advent, I read an article in the Huffington Post by Kelsey Borresen called “50 Really Funny Marriage Tweets that Just Nailed It This Year” which shows how challenging it is to work for peace even in our own homes. For those of you who are single, this may make you appreciate living alone even more. We will look at a sampling (screen):

<https://twitter.com/copymama/status/983511532800741377>

“Marriage is just your spouse perpetually standing in front of the kitchen drawer or cabinet you need to open.”

<https://twitter.com/sophielou/status/951096052924391424>

“After many heart to heart talks my husband and I have decided at this stage of our marriage to go ahead and get separate tubes of toothpaste.”

<https://twitter.com/dadopotamus/status/1023050419864576001>

“I don’t wanna talk about it until you’re about to fall asleep. -Marriage”

<https://twitter.com/cydbeer/status/974475504106418176>

Husband “I thought you were dieting?” Me “I am” Husband “You just ate 6 Oreos” Me “Yes but I want to eat 12. See – Dieting”

<https://twitter.com/ericsshadow/status/948654089176526850>

“my wife and I can’t agree on where to eat so this time we’re going to her favorite restaurant then next time we’ll go to her other favorite restaurant.”

<https://twitter.com/Mirimade/status/1056251060988203008>

“Me: are you ready?

Husband: yes

Me: great, I got myself and the kids ready and everything’s packed up and we’ll actually be on time if we leave right this second, let’s get in the car-

Husband: okay, just need to hop in the shower real quick.”

<https://twitter.com/tracietom/status/1050206331221757958>

“Me watching my husband quietly close the dishwasher after taking just one clean dish out.”

<https://twitter.com/TheAlexNevil/status/953627986871320576>

“Marriage is about understanding what irritates your spouse and using it strategically.”

Peace seems illusive in our world. When I see images of suffering in the world like this



one of Syrian refugees, I am disheartened. I think of the story of the birth of Jesus and how he didn't have a lot more than this child.

As followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we are called to be peacemakers in the world. Yet, the task seems overwhelming because conflict seems to be inevitable and people have a hard time resolving it peacefully. That seemed to be the challenge before the prophet Joel. The occasion for the writings of Joel is a plague of locusts that ravished their land (image of locust invasion). We don't really know if the plague was literal or a metaphorical (invading army). If it was literal, it would have been a natural disaster of great magnitude. If it was metaphorical, it would have been a military disaster. The situation seemed hopeless. And so the prophecy begins with a usual call to repentance and to turning to God's Spirit. The prophet used the plague to sound the alarm about the injustices among the people and the need for them to repent and return to the ways of God by practicing compassion and justice in the land. Joel then went on to warn them that their calamities would only increase if they did not change their ways. Hebrew prophets understood that such calamities were the way God set up the world. These are the laws of the universe. Greed only leads to injustice and misery. Those who want to do well in life, must align themselves with Gods' vision for the world. Joel knew the scriptures and the stories of other prophets where people were warned but didn't fully repent. He could have just given up on this prospect of peace and justice.

That was the choice which the coach of the volleyball team had to make after Caroline's death in the movie "The Miracle Season." The challenge was huge before them. The team had lost their captain, their sense of strength, and their ability to see themselves winning. But the coach chose hope because of her dream for the team. She put up the plan before them on the board. She showed them the potential for a different vision of

their future (clip from moment 58 -58:50). The girls on the team had a choice to make and so did the coach. Thank goodness that they chose to dream of a different future.

And that was what the prophet Joel did with his people. Instead of succumbing to discouragement and fear, the prophet spoke of an amazing vision of hope. The prophecy ended in an unexpected way! The past was not going to dictate their future. Because of God's grace and love, they were going to receive the full power of God's Spirit so that everyone among them would be able to have dreams and visions of a different future (Read Joel 2:28-29 -screen). The turn in the story is unexpected and the vision is so powerful that the people of God held on to it for a long time, and every time they faced great danger, loss, or pain, they recalled that the Spirit of God was just about to do something new. These words became motivators for them to change their lives and ways and to work for a different future. They inspired a countless number of people to start over again! In fact, in the book of Acts in the story of Pentecost we are told that Peter sees the coming of the Holy Spirit on the eleven disciples as a fulfillment of that vision by Joel. Think of the context of that story. The disciples of Jesus were huddled together in fear without a certain future. They had lost their leader and in the midst of that uncertainty, they received the gift of the Spirit. That gift was not like magic to make everything better and where they lived happily ever after! Instead it was a force of life that was unleashed within them to join the work of Christ in the world with boldness and faith.

This message of hope for us today is that the work of peacemaking in the world is not dependent on the patterns of the past. It is about the ability to open our lives to the power of God to help us dream new dreams and to see new visions and possibilities for our lives and for our world. We could let the locusts of our lives and of our world dim our ability to see a new future, or we could let go and follow the star to Bethlehem where new hope is born through a fragile gift of love born in a manger. We could look at the hurts of the past and the obstacles ahead or we could allow God to dream in and through us a new world of God's own making.

It is sometimes very hard to see visions and dreams of a hopeful future when life is hard, or relationships are tough. But in faith we have the ability to let God's Spirit inspire and lead us. A few years ago, actor and film maker Tyler Perry wrote a letter that he wished he could have sent to his younger self because he struggled so much and could not see the potential of his life in those difficult times. Here is the clip:

<https://youtu.be/HMNiPj8o6RU>

(Second service)

Perry began the letter by acknowledging that his childhood self was going through a tough time in life. This is what he said, "Dear Child of God, I know you are having it really hard right now and you spend a lot of time using your imagination seeing yourself running free in the park running away from all the pain. In the reflection of your very sad eyes I see the hurt of watching your mother be belittled and beaten," Perry wrote in the letter. "I see the pain of your own beatings and the insults that you suffer every day. I

feel the horror of the hands of the molesters who are trying to rob you of who you are. As I search your young face for any sign of myself, believe it or not I'm able to smile. Because just behind all of that darkness I see hope. You've got some kind of faith in God, little one. I know you don't know this right now but who you've become is being shaped inside of every one of those experiences...People are dying all around you, you don't think you'll live to see 30 years old. But there's a still small voice inside of you saying you're going to be ok. Looking back on it I know now that that is and was the voice of God. That is the only way to explain how you knew how to navigate your way through turbulent times."

Today the invitation is to let God's voice and Spirit speak to you about the potential of peace into the future. Believe in the miracles because with God nothing is impossible! Amen.