



**James 5:13-20; Mark 9:38-50**  
**Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (September 29, 2024)**

“Be at peace with one another” (Mark 9:50). Is that challenging? How can we work for peace unless there is peace in our heart?

Bringing peace into our world is more than arbitrating between fighting factions even though that is highly necessary. Bringing peace is certainly more than imposing it by force to control and avoid conflict like in a totalitarian state (think of the Pax Romana, or a fascist dictatorship, or communist controlled countries.) Bringing peace is more than working for justice, although that is honorable and a good place to land once we have started our inner work.

Peace, in fact, starts with us in our hearts. Unless we address in prayer and meditation, with self-reflection and curiosity, all the fears that storm our hearts and identify the wounds that generate those fears, we will not know peace. If we do not learn how to make room for God in our hearts and consent to and enjoy unity with God, we will not know the healing power of God’s love.

And we will not know peace.

Perhaps, that’s the reason for Jesus’ strange and harsh words about plucking out eyes and chopping off hands and feet.

Whatever is in our hearts (whether be it jealousy, control, hatred, lust, greed, avarice...), that is a stumbling block and a source of sin for ourselves or for others, needs to be healed. And who better than God can heal wounds?

Christ invites us to be “salt,” an ancient healing tool. How can we, our actions, our words, our relationships begin to heal the world rather than perpetuate more harm? How can we let God be Lord of our lives?

James in his letter invites us to pray.

Whether one experiences suffering or joy; whether one is afflicted with physical or spiritual pain, the recommendation is the same: return to the heart, that is your center; return to the Lord in your prayer; confess your sin; be anointed and be forgiven. This way there will be healing, reconciliation, and wholeness.

It is out of our healing heart that we minister; out of the awe of the greatness of God’s mercy that we witness. It’s out of our gratitude for God’s peace and forgiveness that we reach out, that we bring peace and reconciliation to an alienated and hurting world.

And it is also out of gratitude that we keep our eyes and ears open to the presence of God at work in the world, in other people, and in nature. An open heart experiences no competition but gratitude.

People want to hear good news.

And so do you! You also want to be part of God’s plan for peace for the world by receiving healing and by giving it.

At our last Finance Committee meeting, Finance Secretary, Scott Henkel, shared with us the following information:

1. In-person attendance for 2024 continues to exceed in-person attendance in 2023.

2. Both overall income and overall expenses in July 2024 are practically the same as the income and expenses during the same period in 2023 (not including storm damages).
3. “Special contributions” (donations left to us in a person’s will; or by non-members, near and far, who appreciate our ministry) have increased this year.
4. Income from Trinkets & Treasures is significantly more than 2023.
5. More than 66% of the members who pledged have donated 100% or more of the amount so far.
6. Pledges account for about 41% of our Annual Budget. The remaining 59% of the income comes from either individual donations or other sources of income.

You will receive a letter from me in the next few days explaining our 2024 Stewardship Campaign: Building Faith, Family, Future. The envelop will include an Intent Card where you may indicate your level of support for 2025. Anybody is invited to prayerfully consider what gifts God has given you that you can share with the church. all have an opportunity to grow in faith.

Remember what the children in the film have spoken about:

“Jesus once said that you should believe, like kids do... We just go for it: no doubts, no worries. Having faith like a child means that you trust and know that God can do anything.

Start by talking to God like talking to a friend. And when you see someone who is hurt know that God can make them better. And even when the dark tries to scare you half to death, remember that you are God’s kid, and He’s got your back.

Sometimes, grownups forget how to have faith like a child: they worry about all kinds of stuff. But Jesus wants you to remember what it is like to trust him just like when you were little.

So, are you a child of God? Then trust Him. Trust Him with your full heart and just see what amazing things He'll do."

The prophet Micah summarized his understanding of a faithful life this way:

“God has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?”

God is ready to bless. Let us return to the Lord enthroned in our hearts, and receive God's anointing. Amen.