

## Buying into God's Vision

A sermon delivered by the Rev. Roger Scott Powers  
at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Albuquerque,  
on Sunday, November 17, 2019.

Isaiah 65:17-25

In this morning's reading from the Hebrew scriptures we hear the prophet Isaiah proclaim God's vision for a new world. It is a vision of an imminent new creation -- a new heaven and a new earth. It is a vision of a new Jerusalem, where people will live in joy and peace. It is a vision of shalom, of wholeness and health, prosperity and security, political and spiritual well-being for all of God's people.

"No more shall the sound of weeping be heard . . . or the cry of distress. No more shall there be . . . an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime. . . . They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat. . . . [God's] chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord -- and their descendents as well."

Moreover, in this new creation, even natural born enemies will live together in peace: "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox. . . . They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord." Isaiah's vision of "the peaceable kingdom" is an idyllic vision that takes us back to God's first creation and the paradise of the Garden of Eden.

How far away we are from God's vision of shalom!

- The United States has been at war in Afghanistan for 18 years. It is the longest war in U.S. history. And just last week, U.S. Army General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, predicted that U.S. troops would remain in the country "for several more years."
- Here at home, where Americans own more guns per capita than residents of any other nation, gun violence takes the lives of 36,000 people a year, a gun death rate many times higher than the rates in other developed countries.
- Almost half the world's population – more than 3 billion people – try to eke out an existence on less than \$2.50 a day.
- More than 800 million people in the world do not have enough food to eat. More than 750 million lack adequate access to clean drinking water.
- Even here in the United States, the richest country in the world, 38 million people (almost 12 percent of our population) live in poverty.
- In our own state of New Mexico, 27% of children live in poverty, putting us dead last out of 50 states in terms of child well-being.

We live in a world of violence and war, a world of hunger and poverty, a world of injustice and oppression. At the same time, God holds out a vision of a new world of justice and peace.

There is a great tension between the world the way it is and the world as it should be. As people of faith, we live in the midst of that tension. We long for that world which God intends, and we are painfully aware that our present world remains far from God's vision.

What can we do about it? Well, let's not fool ourselves into thinking that we can bring about the new world that God envisions by ourselves. That would be the height of folly. God created the heavens and the earth. Not us! And if God wishes to build a new world, God will be both architect and contractor.

But we can participate with God. Instead of working at cross purposes with God's vision, we can choose to align our thoughts and actions with God's plans for a new world. In so doing, we can be co-creators with God. We can be God's hands and feet at work in creation.

The question we must ask ourselves today is the question Audre Lorde used to ask. The self-described "Black lesbian, mother, warrior, poet" asked this question: "Are you willing to use the power you have in the service of what you say you believe?"

"Are you willing to use the power you have in the service of what you say you believe?" If we say we believe in God's vision of a new world of justice and peace, are we willing to use the power we have in the service of that vision? Are we willing to buy into God's vision with our time and with our money?

How does what we do with our time serve God's vision of shalom? Does the work we do contribute to a world of justice and peace? Are we raising our children to love God and to love their neighbors, to serve God and to serve their neighbors, to share what they have with those in need? Do we volunteer some of our time in service to others, furthering the work of God in the world through the church or other community organizations?

How about the way we spend our money? How do the choices we make in purchasing goods and services impact God's vision of shalom? What practices are we endorsing with our purchasing dollars? How does the company from which we buy a product or service treat its workers? How much of the purchase price will actually go to the producer? How does the product or service affect the environment?

As consumers, we have tremendous economic power. Every dollar we spend in the global market place is a vote for the world to come. When we buy something from a particular company, we are essentially giving our financial endorsement to that company, to its product, and to its business practices. How are we using our purchasing power to further the new world that God envisions? These are important questions to ponder, particularly now that there are only 38 shopping days left until Christmas!

Fortunately, our church's Social Justice Mission Committee makes it easy for us to buy into God's vision early in the holiday season with its Alternative Christmas Market going on next Sunday following worship. It's an opportunity to do some early Christmas shopping while making a positive difference in the lives of people in need. You can make a donation to Heifer International or the Family Promise Diaper Fund in

honor of a loved one and receive a card to send to that person about the gift made in their honor. You can purchase fair trade coffee from Café Justo -- grown, roasted, and packaged in Mexico with all proceeds going to the workers there. You can buy greeting cards created by Emma, who was living in sanctuary in Albuquerque, then returned to her home country of Honduras, and is now seeking a legal path to immigrate to the U.S. Fabretto, made up of women's cooperatives in northern Nicaragua, will have hand-woven baskets for sale. Fathers Building Futures, a job training program for fathers released from prison, will show off their beautiful, expertly crafted wood products. There will be a silent auction to support Habitat for Humanity's Unity 4 House, which is being funded and built by a coalition of Albuquerque congregations, including St. Andrew. And you can eat lunch at our pop-up café as well.

The organizations you'll be supporting are working for God's new world of justice and peace in all kinds of ways, addressing issues such as economic self-sufficiency, housing and homelessness, child development, job training, education, and the environment.

The prophet Isaiah proclaims God's vision for a new world, a vision of shalom, of wholeness and health, prosperity and security, political and spiritual well-being for all of God's people. Next Sunday we are being offered an easy, concrete way to buy into that vision. Will we use the power we have in the service of what we say we believe? I hope our answer will be yes, not only today, but every day of our lives! Amen!