

“The Peaceable Kingdom”

Before the reading of this scripture:

There are divine promises throughout the Word of God,
in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Many promises of God in the Old Testament, however, are in the future tense.
what will or shall happen in the future.
This represents the “NOT YET” of faith.

A Hebrew Prophet’s authenticity was proven by whether or not his utterances
came to pass in a timely manner.
If not, he was labeled a “False Prophet” and forgotten.

In the New Testament, more but not all, of the promises are in the present tense.
what has happened or is happening.
This represents the “ALREADY” of faith.

Isaiah is a very special prophet, who lived about 700 years before Jesus.
Since most of his prophecies of judgement came to pass in his lifetime,
and many of his prophecies of salvation came to pass in his lifetime;
therefore, some of his prophecies of salvation that did not come to pass in his lifetime
were still trusted, like the ones we listen to today!

Let us listen to the Word of God from Isaiah 11:1 - 10!

This passage is often referred to as a messianic oracle or prophecy.

Messiah is a Hebrew word that means “anointed one”.
(Note: the Greek word for “anointed one” is “Christos” – our Christ.)

In the ancient world, including in Israel,

Kings were anointed.

Priests were anointed.

Maybe even some prophets were anointed.

This anointing would have been done by pouring oil, olive oil or such like,
upon the head of the person being anointed
in a religious (and civic) ceremony.

This special, future Messiah that the Prophet Isaiah speaks of
is not anointed by oil,
But by the “Spirit of the Lord”!

Unlike the religious and political rulers anointed by oil,
all of whom fell short of their calling.
so that they were called “false shepherds” by some true prophets,

This spirit-anointed One from the Stump of Jesse,

Will be full of wisdom and understanding
Counsel and might,
Knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

This special discernment is the Messiah's primal gift.
It makes the Messiah one with the LORD God's will!

The primary function of this Messiah is judicial.
The Messiah does not judge by physical appearances!
The Messiah does not judge by hearsay!

The Messiah brings forth covenantal righteousness.
The poor are heard and treated fairly.
The Messiah gets rid of all the "ISMs" that get in the way of equity.
Ageism
Genderism
Racism
Sexism
and any other ISM that has elevated one person over another.

The Messiah has the authority and ability
To smite the wicked of the earth
To kill wickedness with his breath.

**We Christians confess that this Messiah of Isaiah's prophecy
is Jesus, who we call the Christ.**

It was 700 years after Isaiah uttered and wrote these promises,
but it has been fulfilled in our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah.

The Spirit of God gave Jesus all the Gifts,
to fulfill all the Covenantal responsibilities
with all the authority of life and of death and of new life!
This is the ALREADY of our faith!

The "Peaceable Kingdom" which the Messiah, Jesus
is bringing into being, and will bring to perfect completion,
is the NOT YET of our faith.

Please notice, that the Messiah is not JUST about saving humans,
as important as saving humans is to God.

All creation is the realm of salvation for the anointed one, not just human beings.

The Messiah is in the business of restoring and transforming ALL of creation.

The only human beings even mentioned in this passage
are in infant child still nursing at the breast
and a young child just weaned.

Both these children will play amongst and with venomous snakes.

The Peaceable Kingdom is focused upon "natural" predators and prey
Wolves and leopards, lions and bears, O My!
Lambs and Kids (baby goats), Calves and Fatlings.

Predators and Prey alike will be herbivores, vegetarians if you prefer.

I have been pondering prey and predators a great deal recently,
and how Jesus will transform both.

Surely, the aggression, the violence, the blood lust of predators must be dampened.

Yet, just as surely, as one scholar I read pointed out,
must not the timidity, the fearfulness, the terror of prey be undone and overcome?

I ask you, please raise your hand if you have ever felt preyed upon?

Have you ever been threatened sexually, physically, emotionally, economically,
or in any other way?

Have you ever felt that you were just someone's proverbial meal,
or could be?

Since we have all been children at some point,

I imagine that ALL of us can relate to being prey,
of having someone or something in our lives that was bigger, stronger, faster
and wishing us harm

Or at the very least able to cause us harm, IF she or he wanted too.

And now the more difficult question.

Please raise your hand if you have been a predator.

Have you ever been in the superior position,
knowing you could crush someone, cause them pain or problems,
if you wanted to do so?

Has being in such a position ever felt like a rush to you?

For most of us, we will have to confess that while we have been and maybe are, currently, prey,
of someone or some group.

We have power over others too.

So what will the Messiah do to predators and prey?

Will the Messiah kill predators with the breath of his mouth like the wicked?

Will the Messiah transform prey and predators, making them both something different?

We do not know yet,

but I am reminded of one of my favorite sayings of Abraham Lincoln:

"The best way to destroy an enemy is to make him a friend!"

Isn't this the way Jesus works for the salvation of humans?

Before Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross we were enemies of God.

Jesus's death and resurrection made us friends of God.

We need to be clear, that it is not our job or within our ability to bring about Peaceable Kingdom,
any more than it was our job or with our ability to anoint the Messiah with the Spirit of God!

Yet, since we know who the Messiah is, Jesus the Christ, our Lord and Savior,
and we call this Messiah – Friend and Brother

When we worship Jesus in Spirit and Truth,

When we eat at Jesus' table and eat his spiritual food,

When we go forth to serve the Lord of life in our vocations and our daily lives,
When, day by day, we love the fellow followers of Jesus.
When we show Agape love to our enemies, including our predators,
then we trust that Jesus the Messiah will use even us,
in smaller and bigger ways,
to bring about the Peaceable Kingdom,
which is his eternal realm!

Amen and amen.

The Call to Discipleship:

*Edward Hicks, (1780 – 1849) Quaker writer and teacher and artist,
100 + versions of the The Peaceable Kingdom painting
almost all of them included
William Penn and Native Americans in the background
signing a peace treaty.*

As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman Christians:

*“If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”
(Romans 12:18 NRSV)*