

Peace (Luke 1:79 [KJ] )

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We come to today by way of Good Friday. In many ways this is an oxymoron. When we become attached to the name of that day and all its religious implications, many of you I am sure will shutter. It was not a proud day in the story of our faith, neither is it something we can ignore and get around by simply letting it pass by. We grapple with the retelling the Good Friday event because of the principal character whom we have come to know as, *The Prince of Peace*.

The word, "peace", and the words with reference to it, is found in the Bible 720 times. In the text from Luke, that part of the benediction reads, that by the tender mercy of God, who from on high, will bring the rising sun to visit us in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet, *into the way (or the path) of peace*. Into the way of peace. Many have indicated the perfect peace of Christ and the way to heaven is an automatic and sure thing, once they confess the name of Jesus and make a token acknowledgement that He is the answer. We who are here in this hour of worship are probably as frustrated and bothered from time to time as anyone in any culture, social condition, background, etc. Our few minutes each week in prayer, praise, and examination of God's Word, help us to find and remain in the realm of peace that is provided through the Holy Spirit.

In this realm of peace to the world, the Good News to humanity that Jesus came to impart from God the Father, is the message we prepare ourselves in, in order to go out into the real world around us, our homes, our workplaces, our schools, and our congregational sharing opportunities. We are prepared to share this message today and in the future as God gives it to us and as He tasks us. To this end, we must be diligent observers and partakers of the means of grace. To this end we need regularly, preferably daily, to give more than just a few minutes of our time to receive and renew ourselves in and for the Gospel which we want to serve, and then serve it well.

How can we lead others if we ourselves do not take time to seek the place from whence comes our own leadership? From the late Dr. James Smart's book **The Strange Silence of the Bible In the Church**, we need to be continually cautioned to take heed of His call to the private practices of contemporary Christians. He refers to how many are raised to piety in private devotions, reading mostly what he calls, snippets of five or six comfortable verses of the Bible. We are told that the Word of God is not private, but public. We are reminded that

merely reading the Bible before retiring was never meant to be comfortable bedtime reading to help one sleep more soundly. It is more than that; the Bible is the Christian's marching orders.

An army marches together or it ceases to be an army. If we are part of God's army, we must worship together so that we may be together in Him, and always have the power of the Holy Spirit to guide our feet in the way and into the way of peace.

Today, Easter Sunday, we are humbled and reminded that the way of peace does not come easy nor does it come without a price. The One whom we call Lord, came to bring peace to all humanity and He purchased that piece on our behalf by dying on an old rugged Cross at the top of a hill just outside a city's garbage dump. His death took him into the bonds of Hell. He died for the forgiveness of our sins. He did this so that the victory might be ours and we might know how much He loves each one of us here today. Yes, when you pause and meditate upon it, it was really a Good Friday, and that is why we can celebrate today.

We celebrate around many beautiful pieces of music. Some lyrics from two of my favourite hymns are:

I serve a risen saviour, He's in the world today.  
I know that He is living, whatever men may say.  
I see his hand of mercy, I hear his voice of cheer  
And just the time I need Him He's always near.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today.  
He walks with me and talks with me  
Along life's narrow way.  
He lives, He lives, Salvation to impart.  
You ask me how I know He lives?  
He lives with in my heart.

AND

God sent his Son, they called him Jesus.  
He came to love, heal and forgive.  
He lived and died to buy my pardon,  
An empty grave is there to prove my saviour lives.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.  
Because He lives, all fear is gone.  
Because I know he holds the future,  
And life is worth the living, just because He lives.

May the blessings of Easter be with you and your family this special holy day now  
and always. Amen