REVD. DR. D. J. AJITH KUMAR

Finding Peace in the Shadow of Strife

CNI · 4 February 2024

‘Strife and violence are the result of human sinfulness,

from which Christ came to save us’.

Judges 9.1-6

Psalm 55.4-14

Ephesians 2.14-18

Matthew 26.47-56

Grace and peace be with you all. Today, on this 8th Sunday before Easter, our hearts turn to a theme that resonates through the ages: the connection between human sinfulness, strife, and the transformative power of Christ’s salvation. As we delve into the Scriptures – Judges 9.1-6, Psalm 55.4-14, Ephesians 2.14-18, and Matthew 26.47-56 – let us open our hearts to the profound theological reflection awaiting us.

Judges 9.1-6 – The Seeds of Strife

In the book of Judges, we encounter the tragic narrative of Abimelech, a man driven by power and a hunger for dominance. His story is a stark reminder of the destructive force that sin unleashes upon human relationships. Strife germinated in the soil of jealousy, power-seeking, and pride. How often have we witnessed such seeds of discord in our own lives and communities? Consider a garden where each plant strives for sunlight, water, and nutrients. When one plant seeks to overshadow others, the harmony is disrupted, and the entire garden suffers. Similarly, when sin takes root in our hearts, it breeds strife, disrupting the harmony intended by our Creator.

Psalm 55.4-14 – The Cry for Deliverance

The psalmist pours out his heart, grappling with the pain caused by betrayal and violence. His words echo the universal cry for deliverance from the consequences of human sinfulness. As we navigate our own struggles, it’s crucial to recognize that Christ’s redemptive work extends even into the depths of our anguish. Imagine being caught in a storm at sea, waves crashing against your vessel. In the midst of the chaos, Christ stands as our anchor, offering a steadfast hope that transcends the storms of life. His salvation is a lifeline, pulling us from the tumultuous waters of sin.

Ephesians 2.14-18 – Christ, Our Peace

In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul speaks of Christ as the reconciler, breaking down the walls of hostility that sin erects. The theological foundation of our faith lies in Christ’s redemptive act on the cross, bringing peace to a fractured world. Through His sacrifice, we are united with God and with one another. Picture a broken bridge over a deep chasm. Christ’s sacrifice rebuilds that bridge,

allowing us to cross from the desolation of sin to the abundance of grace. In this restoration, we find unity, the antithesis of strife.

Matthew 26.47-56 – The Arrest of Jesus

In the Garden of Gethsemane, we witness the arrest of Jesus, an act of violence spurred by sin. Peter, in his misguided zeal, draws his sword, embodying the very strife Christ came to address. Jesus, however, rebukes the violence and willingly surrenders, foreshadowing the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.Imagine a moment frozen in time, a sword suspended mid-air. In that moment, Christ's words resound: "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). In the face of strife, Christ calls us to a different way – the way of love and sacrificial peace.

As we reflect on these passages, let us be reminded that Christ's mission is to rescue us from the very roots of strife and violence embedded in our sinful nature. His redemptive work invites us into a journey of transformation, from discord to harmony, from violence to peace.In our troubled world, let us take solace in the promise of Christ's enduring peace. May His example inspire us to reject the weapons of strife and instead embrace the armour of love and reconciliation.

Prayer:

Gracious and Merciful God, as we gather here today, we acknowledge the brokenness within and around us. We thank you for the redemptive work of Christ, who came to save us from the consequences of our sinfulness. Grant us the strength to turn away from strife and violence, seeking instead the path of love and reconciliation.In moments of discord, may Your peace, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Help us to be instruments of Your peace in our families, communities, and the world. May the transformative power of the Gospel be evident in our lives.As we leave this place, let Your grace go before us, guiding us on the journey from strife to harmony. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, we pray.

Amen.