

St. David's Presbyterian Church  
St. John's, NL  
"Paix"  
Dr. J. Dent

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Advent II

For many of us, "peace" is a foreign word. That's why I put the French word in the sermon title. We don't experience peace inside and we certainly don't experience peace at Christmas time, because we have so much to do, so many places to go, so much shopping to figure out. And before we know it, the season is over, and we wonder where it went.

How will we find peace? And when it comes to peace, what will we do without Danny? But you know I'm not talking about political peace, because political peace goes up and down like the wind. But there is a peace inside that holds you better than any hug, speaks to you better than any Christmas card. There is a peace within that speaks to you even better than a close friend.

But before we get to that inner peace, we have to acknowledge the turmoil of our lives. Many outside things try our patience: barking dogs that won't stop, and their owners who see nothing wrong with this, poor driving, not enough time or money to do those things we wished could, health turning against us right when we thought nothing could get in our way, losing those we love, wondering what to do with those and for those who we don't get long with.

I must admit that I have been irritable and unreasonable without knowing for many years. This season would not bring out the best in me, even though it is the season of peace, or at least the coming of the Prince of Peace. It's only recently that I realized my lack of patience and my sense of being ill at ease during this season was in part due to all the bickering and blow ups and anger at home, partly due to my father's drinking, partly due to my own not knowing what to say or do as a smaller child in the midst of it.

Now I know I need help when I sense the turmoil inside. It's not my father's drinking or my mother's enabling or my brother's anger. It's me dealing with what's inside me. And I have noted such even in those who didn't have parents who drank, maybe it was grandparents or aunts or uncles.

Maybe it wasn't drinking at all. I know my father and mother did the best they could to raise us, given all the circumstances. And I now know that I am responsible for my inner peace, or the lack thereof. I can go to a 12 step group like Al-anon or AA or any of the rest to learn and share in a small group about these difficulties.

And as we come into this Christmas season again this year, I am turning to God for that peace. It's hard to erase the tapes of years gone by and things that were said out of frustration, hurt, passing on abuse received, whatever reasons people have for doing some of the turmoil generating things they do.

Yet our reactions and our peace are our responsibility. Our choices for what we do and don't do during this season are within our ability to control, with God's help. I suppose that is obvious at some level, and yet I often hear people tell me how crazy December is. Do you hear that too?

Let's take moments together during this season where we can experience the wolf and the lamb lying down together, the leopard and the goat, the calf and the lion, and a little child leading them. We can take moments to repent (to do a U turn) from our rushed ways, and say a "thank you prayer." We can light an advent candle and remember hope, and peace, and joy and love in our lives. Yes, we can (as the American president so often says).

We can choose God's ways, just as John the Baptist was pointing to Jesus. There is peace available to us as we choose to be in relationship with Jesus. Jesus did more than we can ask or imagine on our behalf. But it is up to us to say "yes" to Him. We can receive hope anew today, as Paul wrote in Romans. We just need a moment.

Let us pray.