

*Sermon Series: Love and Let Live      “Peace Filled Zone”*  
*John 14:1, 11-17, 25-27; Colossians 3:12-17; Psalm 34: 1-4, 8, 11, 13-14*  
*Salem United Methodist Church*  
*October 5, 2014*  
*Rev. Sue Shorb-Sterling*

There is a comic strip called, “Prickly City.” This cartoon features Carmen, a young Hispanic girl and her coyote pup named Winslow an often speaks to our human condition as children often do. In the first frame of one particular cartoon, Carmen is building with Lego blocks. The caption reads. “We create.” In the next frame, Carmen is kicking her building and the Legos are flying everywhere with the caption, “We destroy.” In the third frame, Carmen is hugging Winslow with the caption, “We love.” In the fourth frame, Carmen is kicking Winslow who is grimacing both in shock and pain. The caption reads, “We hate.” The last frame has two images of Carmen. The one image Carmen is smiling with little red hearts above her head. The second image of Carmen has a hateful expression on her face with smoke coming out of the top of her head. The caption there reads, “I wish we would make up our minds.” Create, destroy, love, and hate are all part of our human condition. We can be creating and loving one minute and in the next, we are destroying and hating. Paul McCartney wrote these words for the James Bond movie, “Live and Let Die,” which is filled with violence and destruction. “When you were young and your heart was an open book, you used to say live and let live, But if this ever-changing world in which we're livin' makes you give in and cry, say “Live and Let Die.” This is the final sermon in the series of “Love and Let Live.” Today we will speak to being filled with peace.

None of us are old enough to remember World War I. From what I’ve read, it was a horrible war in which chemicals were used to maim and kill. On the Western Front soldiers lived and fought in mud filled trenches. Yet there were “quiet sectors” that was as much a part of the front as the major offensives. A phenomenon arose in these “quiet sectors” called “Live and Let Live.” Both sides would find reasons to reduce their aggressive actions. For instance, the fighting would stop in the evenings so both sides could cook and eat dinner in peace. Sometimes these enemies who would shoot at each other during the day would even share a meal with each other in the evening! During these lulls in the conflict, games were played and music shared. British General Lord Edward Glicken asked a British soldier if he had shot any Germans. The soldier’s response was, “There was an elderly gentleman with a bald head and a long beard that often showed himself over the parapet.” The General asked him, “Well, why didn’t you shoot him?” The soldier’s response was, “Shoot him, sir, why, Lord bless you sir, he’s never did me no harm!” The pinnacle of the “Live and Let Live” phenomenon was the Christmas Truce of 1914. During this truce, both sides exchanged Christmas greetings, joint caroling, and even the exchange of gifts. This reminds me of the last frame from Prickly City in which Carmen states, “I wish we would make up our minds.”

Military historians and sociologists have all strived to find the reason behind this “Live and Let Live” phenomenon of World War 1. The conclusion seems to be is that both sides had a shared cultural and religious tradition. And that tradition is based in the Christian faith of those fighting on both sides. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives.” What does the world give us? What is world? The world is not a globe. The world is a planet on which there is water, soil, air, plants, animals, and humans. What does this world give? It gives us storms that can destroy. Some animals kill, but mostly it is humans that gives not as Jesus gives. We can’t make up our minds to live in God’s peace or create conflict. What is this peace that Jesus gives us?

In both our passages from the Gospel of John and from Colossians, the word, peace, is closely connected to the word, love. In John’s Gospel, Jesus states that we are to keep his commandment of love as a way of showing the world that we love Jesus. He also states that he will send the Holy Spirit to give us courage and truth. By being filled with God’s love and the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives us peace. What is this peace that Jesus gives? When we think of peace we think of a state of tranquility or security that lies within or a harmony in personal relations. Also we think of a freedom from hostilities or war. I believe that the peace that Jesus gives is more than this. Dietrich Bonhoeffer made a speech at an ecumenical conference in

Denmark in 1934. He offered this definition of peace, “There is no way to peace along the way of safety. For peace must be dared. It is itself the great venture and can never be safe. Peace is the opposite of security. To demand guarantees is to want to protect oneself. Peace means giving oneself completely to God's commandment. Wanting no security, but in faith and obedience laying the destiny of the nations in the hand of almighty God. Not trying to direct it for selfish purposes. Battles are won not with weapons, but with God. They are won when the way leads to the cross.” Peace means giving oneself completely to God's commandment, the commandment of love. And the cross becomes a symbol of God's great love for us. Jesus died so we would know we are loved and to give us new life today and for all eternity. So then the question becomes, “How do we win with God and not weapons?”

John Wesley stated in a sermon called “Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount,” these words on making peace, “when one is being “filled with the love of God and all [hu]mankind [one] cannot confine the expressions of [love] to [one's] own family, or friends, or acquaintance, or party; no, nor those who are partakers of like precious faith; but steps over all these bounds that s/he may do good to every [hu]man; that s/he may some way or other manifest his/her love to neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies.”

Both Wesley and Bonhoeffer are defining peace from a Christian perspective as they lived in a Christian culture. With the ability to communicate around the world in an instant and with the ability to fly to any parts of the world within hours, we have discovered the pluralism in our world. In our everyday life, we come in contact with different religious faiths and cultures. Yet, God has spoken to each about peace. In the Hebrew Scriptures, a blessing from God is a blessing of peace. Our Jewish friends speak of God's shalom which means a completeness. When one is complete with God, one has peace. Our Muslim friends, greet one another with the words, “Salaam” which is the Arabic word for peace. In fact, the word, Islam, means peace. One of the attributes of God in the Koran is called As-Salam which means God is a God of peace and security. Our Muslim friends believe the teachings of Muhammad are the way of peace. He speaks about making friends with one's enemy through a peaceful means and repelling evil with good. Those who follow these Islamic teachings of peace are repulsed by extremists who take other verses from the Quran out of context to create terror and to do violence. Throughout the ages those who proclaim to be Christian or Jews have taken, and still are taking, certain biblical verses out of context to do violent acts against humanity in the name of God, too. God's message for the world is one of peace. The message of peace is not lost in the Buddhist and Hindu faiths either. Buddha stated that “Peace comes within. Do not seek it without.” For the Hindus, peace is a reflection of spiritual consciousness. Violence is the reflection of an unevolved consciousness. To each of these faiths, God's message to the people is one of peace. Humans may be receiving this message through different voices, but the message is the same. We are to love God and live peacefully among ourselves.

This sermon series was entitled, “Love and Let Live.” We have discussed from a Christian perspective issues that break down relationships such as how we use words to tear down rather than build up, how hate destroys, and how being judgmental creates strife and conflict. Today we are being challenged to be creators of peace and this begins with each of us. In the word of Paul to the Colossians, “As God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. The word of Christ must live in your hearts richly.” Amen.

**Resources:** <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/paulmccartney/liveandletdie.html>; Church of the Resurrection Sermon Series: “The Power of Words,” [www.cor.org](http://www.cor.org); “Live and Let Live System,” <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-live-and-let-live-system#>; World War 1: Live and Let Live, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMR\\_sddvM3I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMR_sddvM3I); John Wesley's “Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, III”, II.4; *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Brief Life* by Renate Bethge; “Peace in Quran, [islam101.net](http://islam101.net); “The Hindu Ethic of Non-Violence,” [www.himalayanacademy.com](http://www.himalayanacademy.com)