

Sermon 23.11.05

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Call to worship (from Leader materials)  
( from Romans 12:14–21)

**One:** As followers of Jesus, we are called

**Many:** to bless those who persecute us;

**One:** to rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn;

**Many:** to live in harmony with others and not be arrogant .

**One:** As disciples of the Prince of Peace, we are called

**Many:** to not repay anyone evil for evil;

**One:** to, as far as possible, live peaceably with all;

**Many:** to feed our enemies when they are hungry and offer a drink when they are thirsty .

**One:** Ours is a hard and holy calling, friends . And so we gather .

**Many:** We gather for prayer and study .

**One:** We gather for singing and silence .

**Many:** We gather for encouragement and support .

**All:** We gather for worship .

### **Benediction**

(adapted from Romans 12:1–2, 15:13)

I appeal to you therefore,

on the basis of God's mercy,

to present yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,  
which is your true worship .

Do not be conformed

to the violent patterns of this world,

but be transformed toward peace

by the renewing of your mind,

so that you may discern what is the will of God— what is good and acceptable and perfect .

And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope  
by the power of the Holy Spirit . Amen .

1 Samuel 25: 1-35

Now Samuel died; and all Israel assembled and mourned for him. They buried him at his home in Ramah.

Then David got up and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

There was a man in Maon, whose property was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was clever and beautiful, but the man was surly and mean; he was a Calebite. David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, 'Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. Thus you shall salute him: "Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. I hear that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing, all the time they were in Carmel. Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your sight; for we have come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David."' '

When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David; and then they waited. But Nabal answered David's servants, 'Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are breaking away from their masters. Shall I take my bread and my water and the meat that I have butchered for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?' So David's young men turned away, and came back and told him all this. David said to his men, 'Every man strap on his sword!' And every one of them strapped on his sword; David also strapped on his sword; and about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, 'David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he shouted insults at them. Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we never missed anything when we were in the fields, as long as we were with them; they were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know this and consider what you should do; for evil has been decided against our master and against all his house; he is so ill-natured that no one can speak to him.'

Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. She loaded them on donkeys and said to her young men, 'Go on ahead of me; I am coming after you.' But she did not tell her husband Nabal. As she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, David and his men came down towards her; and she met them. Now David had said, 'Surely it was in vain that I protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; but he has returned me evil for good. God do so to David and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of all who belong to him.'

When Abigail saw David, she hurried and alighted from the donkey, and fell before David on her face, bowing to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, 'Upon me alone, my lord, be the guilt; please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. My lord, do not take seriously this ill-natured fellow Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him; but I, your servant, did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent.

'Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, since the LORD has restrained you from blood-guilt and from taking vengeance with your own hand, now let your enemies and those who

seek to do evil to my lord be like Nabal. And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. Please forgive the trespass of your servant; for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD; and evil shall not be found in you as long as you live. If anyone should rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living under the care of the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. When the LORD has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you prince over Israel, my lord shall have no cause of grief, or pangs of conscience, for having shed blood without cause or for having saved himself. And when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.'

David said to Abigail, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today! Blessed be your good sense, and blessed be you, who have kept me today from blood-guilt and from avenging myself by my own hand! For as surely as the LORD the God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there would not have been left to Nabal as much as one male.' Then David received from her hand what she had brought him; he said to her, 'Go up to your house in peace; see, I have heeded your voice, and I have granted your petition.'

SERMON (Slides/images start at 16. Click [HERE](#) to view)

In our call to worship, we declared: (IMAGE) -

As disciples of the Prince of Peace, we are called to not repay anyone evil for evil;  
to, as far as possible, live peaceably with all;  
to feed our enemies when they are hungry and offer a drink when they are thirsty .  
Ours is a hard and holy calling, friends .  
And so we gather .We gather.

We gather. - to learn, to pray, to act. All in the name of the Prince of Peace.

Back in January 2002, (IMAGE) just months after 9/11, an article was published in *Sojourners* magazine titled *Violence is against my religion*<sup>1</sup>, written by our own Bethany Spicher Schonberg.

In that article, Daryl Byler, from the DC office of MCC, spoke of the work of peace churches as “preventative defense”... that’s what the work of MCC is all about.  
Preventative defense.

Further along Bethany wrote: ‘Mennonites and their historic peace church fellows, the Brethren and Friends, have been doing the work of homeland security long before it became a household phrase.’

homeland security... preventative defense

Language to help make sense of what it might look like to practice peace.

We heard from Karen and Jae about their work in Korea - fostering peace.

I want to take a look at our scripture and then share a couple of stories today.

In our scripture this morning Abigail engaged in “preventative defense”. (IMAGE) She risked her life, was curious, humble and willing to take action. And she didn’t do it alone. Others, unnamed others helped in this creative act of peacemaking.

As Marvin told us, David’s band of followers and soldiers was hungry - they’d been on the run from Saul - and found themselves in the southern wilderness, camped out with Nabal’s shepherds.

They asked for hospitality to be shared - and when that was rejected, David wanted blood. His honor was questioned, and he sought revenge and what he thought was rightfully his.

One of Nabal’s servants ran and told Abigail what was going on.

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<sup>1</sup> [Bethany’s Sojourner’s article from January 2002](#)

There's the first of our creative actors - that servant whose name we don't know - one who risked and sought a different way. He went to someone who might bring about creative change.

Abigail then turns the story around with the sharing in abundance - load the donkeys! They brought two hundred loaves, five sheep ready dressed, wine, clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. A feast.

She not only brought a feast, but she led the way. What a courageous act. And others, again unnamed, helped make this happen. Abigail wasn't working alone here.

Preventative defense takes a village.

Through creativity, risk taking, and the work of many, this story was turned around. Instead of yet another tale of bloodshed and revenge, we have those with little power bringing about peace.

A story -

What began as an experiment in listening to one another has become a journey of equality through music and mutual respect.<sup>2</sup> (IMAGE)

In 1999 the West-Eastern Divan orchestra was founded by the late Palestinian scholar Edward Said (Sigh-eed) and Israeli pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim. (IMAGE)

From that collaboration, the Barenboim-Said Academy was formed. This ensemble brings together young musicians from Israel, Palestine and other countries in the Middle East.

Based on the principle of education through music, the Academy provides opportunities, through dialogue and music, to listen to one another.

*You can't play together if you don't listen to one another.*

Historically, they have not let political boundaries and tensions hold them back. But the ongoing Israel-Hamas war has tested these efforts in new ways, making it harder to promote civil debate and to find common ground among the orchestra members.

"It takes courage for you to be here," founder and conductor Mr. Barenboim, who has worked almost 25 years in pursuit of Middle East peace, told his students - "We have to listen to each other".<sup>3</sup>

Some students have questioned whether they should even play music together in a time of war. Others say that music has brought them closer. (IMAGE)

In the days leading up to the academy concert last week, the strains of the war were evident.

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<sup>2</sup> [YouTube: The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra and the Barenboim-Said Akademie](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Where Israelis, Palestinians and Iranians Must Listen to One Another](#)

Some Palestinian students were having doubts about performing, concerned that they would project an aura of harmony at a time of deep division and suffering. But after prolonged debate, they decided it was important to embrace the spirit of the institution.

(IMAGE) “Our hearts are heavy; our minds are elsewhere with every single person affected by the devastating situation in Palestine and Israel,” the students said in the statement. “May our music bring us together, may it heal a little piece of our hearts.”

Both on and off the stage, they attempt to live into those words: listen to one another.

Preventative defense - creative peacemakers. Making music, sharing stories.

(STORY 2)

Yesterday, for some in Mennonite Church USA it was a day of prayer and action - many traveling to Oak Flat, (IMAGE) a sacred site of the Apache people - about an hour east of Phoenix to gather in prayer and solidarity.

Oak Flat is a cactus-covered,(IMAGE) sun-baked landscape of pinnacled rock formations and Native American archaeological and burial sites, home to a plethora of plants and animals.<sup>4</sup>

Up until 2014, the U.S. Forest service managed those lands as part of Tonto National Forest. Back in 2014, Arizona lawmakers inserted language requiring a land swap into a last-minute defense appropriations bill. The defense bill was considered must-pass legislation, and President Obama signed it into law — formally requiring the transfer of Oak Flat to Resolution Copper upon the completion of a federal environmental study.(IMAGE)

To this day, the Apache say, they forage Oak Flat for traditional foods such as acorns and for medicinal plants. (IMAGE) They also gather there for religious rites, including sweats and coming-of-age ceremonies known as Sunrise Dances, in which young girls are ushered into womanhood.

In the Apache spiritual tradition, holy places are not bricks-and-mortar constructs such as churches, but ancient landscapes such as these.

Wendsler Nosie Sr., an Apache elder, (IMAGE) helped found Apache Stronghold - a group organized around the protection of Oak Flat. The group has filed a lawsuit<sup>5</sup>, which is now before the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, arguing that the deal to trade Oak Flat to Resolution Copper in exchange for other lands scattered throughout the state violates their religious rights. (IMAGE) They say

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2021/04/12/oak-flat-apache-sacred-land/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2023-06-14/apache-copper-mine-sacred-land-arizona>

construction of the mine would prevent them from conducting their religious ceremonies and break their ties to the land forever,

“All we’re trying to do is go home.” says Nosie, “Where we are from. Where we originated, and Oak Flat is that place.”

But there is not total consensus. Tensions exist.

James Phillips is a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe and a father of two. He is also a Resolution Copper employee who supports the mine.

The job has allowed him to support his family, including his aging parents. It has also left him ostracized from others on the reservation, where fellow tribe members have accused him of being a “traitor” and of not caring about Apache traditions.

What does it mean to be a maker of peace; a bringer of justice?

What does it look like to work together - creatively and with courage?

We hear these stories, maybe stand alongside those who suffer...but what is our role, both in the creation of the injustice, and the restoration to a more just way of being?

There is an intersection of these two stories. Copper.

Back in 2014, it was an amendment to the National Defense Authorization act that brought about the transfer of land to the mining company. We are a society that voraciously uses copper - in our vehicles, refrigerators, cell phones... and our military machinery.

War uses an incredible amount of resources. Our lifestyles that want the newest and best consume lots of natural resources. Our politically driven belief that war is the answer consumes massive amounts of metals.

I don’t have many answers, but I hold onto this way of being; to Educate. Pray. Act.

To be creative bringers of peace we, like Abigail, like the musicians listening together, like those gathered at Oak Flat - we need to be willing to step out in faith, courageously, creatively, together.

My friends, we need to be wise - educating ourselves, but not becoming overwhelmed and so turning away in despair.

Join me, as we hold a moment of silence for all - makers of peace past and present, and for the wisdom of our own stepping out in the name of the One who came in Peace.