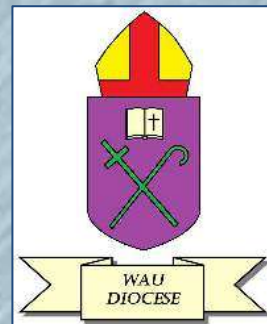


Concord

for peace and reconciliation



A Lent Study Course for 2014
themed on peace and reconciliation

*Created by the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and
Sudan, Diocese of Wau*

Concord

Noun

Pronunciation: With the stress on the first syllable

1. A state of agreement; harmony; union.
2. (grammar) agreement of words with one another, in gender, number, person or case
3. (music) an agreeable combination of tones heard at the same time.
4. (legal) an agreement between two parties.

Synonyms: Accord, agreement, amity, calmness, comity, concert, concordance, consensus, consonance, friendship, goodwill, peace, placidity, rapport, serenity, tranquillity, tune, unanimity, understanding, unison

“Let us ever remember that our interest is in concord, not in conflict, and that our real eminence rests in the victories of peace, not those of war.”

William Mc Kinley (25th President of the United States of America)

A Forward By the Rt Rev Moses Deng Bol

Lent is a time of year that is specially set aside for Christians to grow and learn more about their faith. As a Church in South Sudan, in the North Eastern corner of Africa we face many challenges but one of them is not enthusiasm for our faith.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to offer this course of learning, a thing made possible through the use of our own internet connection. This is an easy course to use and can work as well in North America as it can in South Africa.

The focus of the course is on peace and reconciliation and draws on stories from the Bible to allow people to learn and grow together. Much of the learning is done through discussion, enabling the sharing of fellowship as well as knowledge. I really hope that this course is fun to attend as well as challenging and instructive. It has never been so important, especially now in South Sudan, to look for peace and seek out in each other the peace we all need and that Jesus brought to us in his teachings.

The internet also allows us to make this course something we can all share together and I really hope that you will make time to connect with us in Wau during lent, share your insights with us and everyone else trying this Lent Study course. In this way we can all reach out in fellowship and perhaps learn more from each other. It's an exciting idea.

Whatever you decide to do it is my prayer that this course will help you to grow in the knowledge and love of God and bring you closer to Jesus as the events of Easter approach.

I would like to thank my staff for all the hard work that they put in to preparing this course and I would like to wish you every blessing in your time of study this lent.

Every Blessing *+Moses*

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Notes for Course Leaders

This course is intended to be used anywhere by anyone so there is a lot of scope in our notes for using this course in your own culture and location. There is no real need for anything else than one copy of the course. The Bible verse is provided and everything can be done verbally. If you want them worksheets can be printed for each week to give to those who attend. We hope that keeping things simple will help those with few resources and focus the minds of those that do. The important part of the course is the discussion of the Gospel. We hope that the following notes will help give you the confidence to provide a good learning environment and run a successful course.

Prayer for Your Lent Course

We feel that it is important to pray for the work of this Lent Study course. Encourage your church family to pray for the Lent course, the people attending and leading it. If you have regular prayers said in services or in vigils include the Lent Study course during Lent so that all of your work is offered to God and may be blessed at the same time. If several people are leading the Lent Study course they may find strength in a short time of prayer before and after the sessions.

Be Welcoming

Ensure that all the people coming to the course are made welcome. Pick a location to hold the course that is comfortable and suitable to all those that may come. Help to make people feel at ease by offering hospitality if you can. If you can offer a drink or something to eat this helps a lot. It may be that all you can offer is a hug and a smile, this can work really well. Most people are nervous at the beginning of a meeting like this, especially if they are people that do not know one another and are new to church.

Greet one another and share names

When everyone has gathered and been made welcome take the time to introduce yourself and any helpers that are with you. Then suggest that everyone should introduce themselves in the same way so that there are no strangers and everyone is known. If someone refuses that's OK they will probably change their mind later. Always introduce new people if they join in the following weeks. Helping people to feel relaxed and part of a group will make them much more open to sharing in the group which is important for the course to succeed. Ask people at this point every week if they have any prayer needs so that at the start of the course they can be prayed for. This also helps people to feel included in a group of friends.

A Safe Space

Before you begin each course session agree with everyone that this is a safe space because nothing that is said will be repeated away from the group. There is a strong element of trust to this but making people understand that the group is a safe space to talk is important to allowing people to be truly honest when sharing with the group.

Presenting the Course sessions

Plan ahead and be organised so that you can take your time. Have a way of beginning such as lighting a candle, ringing a bell or singing a song. Ensure everyone knows that from this point on they are in session. Say prayers for the group remembering any needs that were given earlier.

Discussions often take more time than you think. Discussing the questions asked for each Gospel passage are important to the course. As the leader you will know the answers and it may be that you need to

guide the discussions if people are straying too far from the point. Use this time to add knowledge that people may not have seen from the passage themselves. Be careful to prevent differences of opinion becoming arguments. It is OK to have different views and disagree but people should have respect for one another. Also remember that it is possible that people will learn other valuable things from each session so try to be open to this possibility.

It may be best to select a reader to read the Gospel aloud for each session and if you cannot provide worksheets listen to it read several times. The version given is the NIV version. There is no harm in using other versions of the Bible if they are more familiar or people bring their own Bibles. This may help discussion which is a good thing.

Take care to allow plenty of time for the questions so that people can say what they think and talk thoroughly. At the end of the questions encourage people to see how the session applies to the life around them.

Sharing with Others

It may be that in your location there are several churches. Our Lent Study Course can also be used as a tool to share fellowship with other Christians. It can be a way to share resources and spread costs, perhaps allowing you to do together something that you could not do alone. If you consider sharing our course with other churches remember to respect your neighbours and seek to work with them in faith.

Sharing on Our Website

We would like to connect anyone using this Lent Study course in faith by using our website. We are asking for responses from each Lent Study group. A forum has been created on the internet that anyone can join and exchange in fellowship. We hope that many people will look at these messages, be encouraged and even learn something. Each session includes a short time to think of what to send. The forum for Concord can be found using this link. http://bit.ly/Concord_Lent_Course

Summing up and Going with Grace

Talking about the Gospel is very important and the way that this course teaches. But it is also just as important to draw the discussion to a point and finish the session with the group realising that they have learned something and been challenged.

Every session has a summing up passage that draws the session to a conclusion. There is also a prayer set on the theme that everyone should be encouraged to join in with. If in your location you cannot provide worksheets this prayer could be repeated several times to allow people to join in.

Take a moment to ask the group how they think they might apply what they have learned in their lives. Think about what message your group would like to send us in Wau and perhaps a member of your group could be asked to do that. Also fix a date for the next session so that everyone present knows it.

It may be that particular needs or concerns will have been raised during the session. This is a time that can be set aside to pray for these needs or the people that they affect.

Finish each session with the Grace prayer this will help to re enforce the idea of unity and fellowship. If it is possible and suitable in your location say this prayer holding hands and looking at one another as you pray. Doing this helps people to feel connected by the love of God and so as they go God's love goes with them.

When all the people have gone say a prayer for those that attended and anyone helping you to present this Lent Study Course.

It is also wise to make a note of anything that went particularly well or even particularly badly so that you can also learn from each session. If there is anything that you would like to share with us about what worked well or not we would be very glad to know it.

What if They Want More ?

Part of the aim of this Lent Study course is to reach out to people and make them think about Jesus. This can have a strong effect which may result in two things.

A person may feel that a session has left them with questions or a need to talk about serious events in their lives. It is important to be prepared for this and be ready to meet this need if it comes. Helping a person at this time can be an important step to them accepting Jesus in to their lives.

Attending the Lent Study course may encourage people new to faith but feeling the call of God to come to your church. This is a time of exploration for them and your church should be ready for this possibility too. It is important to help such people start their journey of faith with confidence and love.



The Lent Course Authors:



Bishop Moses Deng Bol -

Bishop Moses has the most demanding role in the diocese by simply being responsible for everything. Something he does with grace, skill and diligence.

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Reverend Joseph Mamer Manot -

Principle Causes – Week 1

Rev Joseph serves the Diocese of Wau in his spare time because he has a full time job as Executive Director of Aweil Community Centre for Development. Until recently Rev Joseph was the Principal of St John's, the theological College of Wau Diocese serving the local cluster of 8 ECSSS dioceses.

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Mary John –

Beating Violence – Week 2

Mary John is the Coordinator of the Mothers Union of Wau Diocese. Because Mary writes in Arabic her work was translated by Kekulina (in red) who is one of her workers providing literacy, financial and education planning through the Mothers Union of the Diocese.

Mary can be contacted through Kekulina

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Reverend Peter Angui Akook -

Tribal Fighting – Week 3

Seeking Peace – Week 4

Slippery Truths – Week 5

Living Peace – Week 6

Rev Peter co-ordinates the Wau Diocese Theological Training by Extension program and is the acting Diocesan Development Officer. Peter wrote 4 sessions showing his commitment and dedication to his faith.

Contact Peter at tee@wau.anglican.org

Lent Course Week 1

Principle Causes

By Rev Joseph Mamer



Please read the Bible accounts below:

James Chapter 4 Verses 1 to 3

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? **2** You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. **3** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. If your brother sins, go and show him his fault when the two of you are alone. If he listens to you, you have regained your brother.

Matthew Chapter 12 Verses 36 & 37

36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. **37** For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

Matthew Chapter 5 Verses 21 to 26

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' **22** But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca, ' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. **23** "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. **25** "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. **26** I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Matthew Chapter 5 Verses 38 to 41

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' **39** But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. **40** And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. **41** If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

Setting the Scene

Before the independence of South Sudan on 9th July, 2011, Sudan was at war with itself for almost four decades. I call it “wars” because Sudan had many wars within itself divided into two or even three phases.

Sudan got its independence after our former Western colonialists left Sudan in 1956 even after Sudan got her independence in 1956 there were internal political struggle between Southerners in the Sudan government who claimed their identity as black African natives and were not politically satisfied with the new imbalanced government. In 1972 the then dishonoured Addis Ababa Agreement was signed, little relative peace was experienced for about 11 years and then in 1983 another long civil war broke out although it was a continuation of the first civil war of 1955-1972, but it lasted for more than four decades which culminated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in Nairobi Kenya in 2005.

As I said earlier the Sudan civil wars are divided into phases, the Second Sudanese Civil War started 1983. The war took place mostly in southern Sudan and was the longest and deadliest war of the later 20th century. Roughly 1.9 million civilians were killed in southern Sudan, and more than 4 million were forced to flee their homes at one time or another since the war began.

The war is usually characterized as a fight between the southern and the northern governments. Religion is the crucial cause in the conflict. The North, with roughly two-thirds of Sudan’s land and population, is Muslim and Arabic-speaking; the Northern identity is an inseparable integration of Islam and the Arabic language. The South is more native African in race, culture, and religion. Its identity is native African, with Christian influences and Western orientation.

Another factor in the Second War was the natural resource of Sudan, especially in the South, where there are large oil fields. The South also has major access to the Nile River, and is much more fertile. The North of the country is on the edge of the Sahara desert. The northern inclination was to control these resources, as well as southern people, contributed hugely to the war.

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

1. Have you ever been in an argument, how did it start?
2. What are often the causes of an argument?
3. What is it about an argument that will let it turn to violence and injury?
4. Why is it that Jesus is saying the gift should not be offered to God in the second reading until the giver is reconciled with his brother?
5. Particularly thinking of the first reading how does the way you live your life affect the way others live theirs?
6. In South Sudan many resources are in short supply and poverty is wide spread the government struggles to cope with this. How can these factors affect people's willingness to fight?
7. Many people in South Sudan have experience of combat and the terrible effects of war, few have ever had counselling. After living so long with war no one knows what peace looks like. What can be done to make peace more than just an absence of fighting?
8. What is Jesus saying in the last passage? Should we always give in to evil?
9. Do Christians have a role in sustaining peace?
10. Is there anything that you can do as a person to help build peace or reduce the causes of fighting?

Summing Up

“This weeks’ session teaches two things. First, it is likely that the cause of an argument may be us, through our actions or our ignorance. Second, we can all take a part in making peace a reality. Jesus taught the critical importance of not allowing hatred to go unresolved.

Jesus makes it very plain that ultimately there is a price to pay for our actions, both now on Earth and later before God. The way we live defines us and influences the way others live. Arguments are a fact of life but they do not need to lead to violence or hatred.

How many lives could be saved or improved by simply knowing this?

Pray together:

“Dear Lord God thank you for your unconditional love you have graciously given us even when we fight against neighbours, friends, or kill one another you still love us dearly. Lord I pray you help us realize what “causes fighting” is our unmet human desires, help us Lord so that our human desires as a manifestation of a work of flesh do not bring us into conflict and fighting as we are one family and your children. Heavenly father I pray you hear our sincere contrite hearts and bring in us a genuine love, care for one another so that we that we do not become too much a self-centred community but a caring family of God. We pray God to bring a complete transformation in our hearts so that we love others even when we are hurt, abandon hatred to solve all our human differences understandably and lovingly.

I also pray that this small “Lent Course” work initiative from Wau Diocese will be a blessing to those who will read it, help them know that fighting is not the best but forgiveness as our Lord Jesus taught us not to revenge is the best way in solving our conflicts, disagreements and differences. Sometime it is hard to accept it but it’s a command from God. There are so many inter-communal and tribal conflicts especially in South Sudan, communities resorted to fighting, scramble over limited resources but God I pray that you totally change in our lives and negative attitudes that we may have against one another in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen”

For the Week Ahead

“In the coming week think about things that have caused arguments for you. How were they settled? could they have been settled better? Are you holding a grudge or a hatred for someone that is getting in the way of your relationship with God? Do your own actions condemn you? Pray about that this week and look for peace.”

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

Lent Course Week 1 Leaders Notes

Principle Causes

By Rev Joseph Mamer



Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and pray for each other. Then share the Bible accounts below.

James Chapter 4 Verses 1 to 3

1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? **2** You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. **3** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. If your brother sins, go and show him his fault when the two of you are alone. If he listens to you, you have regained your brother.

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Another factor in the Second War was the natural resource of Sudan, especially in the South, where there are large oil fields. The South also has major access to the Nile River, and is much more fertile. The North of the country is on the edge of the Sahara desert. The northern inclination was to control these resources, as well as southern people, contributed hugely to the war.

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.

1. Have you ever been in an argument, how did it start?

I have not been directly involved in an argument but I can at least share my thoughts about arguments, most of arguments start with a human desire, disagreements, misunderstanding between people, nations or groups of people. Sometimes it happens as a result of differing opinions over something, for example, couples may argue perhaps a wife may prefer a certain school as the best school for their children and the husband may have a different school as his preference, this can be the source of argument sometimes.

It is always good and healthier if arguments are constructive not destructive to promote a healthy Christian community or family that cherishes peaceful co-existence. Let us look in Philippians chapter 2: v3-4 *“do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interest of the others”* rivalries arguments and disagreements among Christians as it mentioned below by James, causes destruction. It damages goodwill, trust, and peace the foundation of good human relations, it hampers progress towards important goals, because argument is a result of desire and want. It makes us self-centred rather than love-centred. Jesus understood how destructive arguments can be and he prayed (John 17:21) for his followers to be “one” which means they must first be united by peace because without peace there is no “oneness”

Proverbs 15:v1 says, *“ A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger”* look at this verse, all our arguments and conflicts start in human hearts and result into bigger conflicts and even wars as has been the case of Sudan and South Sudan. It was out of a self-centred desire and a competitive desire that brought untold devastation to South Sudan.

Let us look at James 4:v1 quarrels and conflicts come within us especially as a result of *“unmet desire”* As Christians, our arguments and talk must always build up one another so that it does not result into fights and conflict in the long run. Respecting other people’s opinions and thoughts are always the best ways of arguing your points. Sometimes we desire to have something but do not have it and out of that *“unmet desire”* results conflict or argument, trying to project it to someone else. Also sometimes when we are refused something we desire we tend to cause conflict and unnecessary argument desiring to achieve what our passion and will wants and that is why James says, where does quarrel and conflict begins, it is among you, your passion and desire. We do not receive them as asked because we wrongly request or ask them with bad motives and that is why sometimes we do not receive them, because God looks inside our heart. So we should always try and avoid too much desire full with bad motives because it brings conflict within us and causes arguments.

2. What are often the causes of an argument?

In most cases, many arguments happen as result of dissatisfaction between individuals or even a family unit, small groups of people or communities. Neighbours may disagree over something or even a village border can cause an argument. Competitiveness causes arguments or produces negative results and may significantly damaged personal

relationships. Aggressive language, statements, selfishness or ego-centric (self-centred) attitudes and bad characters such as not being considerate for others.

In my culture, which is Dinka, family property such as cows are communally shared by a family, no one could own a cow alone until all boys are married and the father and they become members of that particular family unit or clan and follow the same suit. They know who should take what and that is the legal and binding rule, but these days it causes terrible and hot arguments and even fights in the event that a father fails to equally distribute cows to his sons (It is unfortunate that girls do not have a share).

I think I will use James 4:v1-3 entirely in this article, he makes a specific application of the fundamental principle Jesus taught in Matthew 15:19 *“Our heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft false testimony, slander”* Our hearts are the wellsprings of all our thoughts, desires, words and actions, therefore it’s the source of our quarrels and conflicts.

3. What is it about an argument that will let it turn to violence and injury?

Arguments where one party is unwilling to listen to other peoples’ thoughts and opinions prompt a further response. Sometimes an argument could be over water a source, in fact this has these days become a common source of community conflict and violence. Poor animal grazing in swampy land has become a conflict zone because animals share small places for grazing and cattle rustlers fight over scarce water points or where green pastures are scarcely shared.

Our communities are these days very sensitive to cross-border issues, we used not to have border related conflicts and violence even in recent years but these days, communities are sensitive with the issues related to state borders, county borders and even village borders, it has caused so much violence and fighting in recent years.

Arguments that cause violence and injuries start as the same insignificant arguments but yield no positive result, rather “argument where by each one will not listen, hesitant to consider other people’s concerns, points of view and most importantly respect other people’s rights. Because any argument or discussion where one does not respect or listen to another often results in conflict and violence unless it is handled with extreme care and sensitivity.

Some arguments that turn to violence and injury are arguments that are aimed at nowhere and lack any essence of objectivity or sensitivity. In most cases it turns into injury and violence as the argument is not intent on achieving anything. Another thing is that violence and injury happen in some arguments as the only means that appear left for resolution. When many strategies have failed, people resort to violence which brings injuries to those allegedly involved in the conflict, disabling their ability to argue further.

4. Why is it that Jesus is saying the gift should not be offered to God in the second reading until the giver is reconciled with his brother?

Jesus' whole ministry was the ministry of forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. Jesus' death has unconditionally justified and reconciled humanity with God and so for use to come in front of God, presenting ourselves as a living sacrifices, we must first be reconciled with our human brothers and sisters. Whatever gift we offer to God symbolically represents our self-sacrifice to God and is a not material gift as such, God does not need wealth. Therefore because of that sense and its significance in this gift, we must try to reconcile, not just bringing a gift to God while holding grudges and hatred against our sisters and brothers. This has a significant meaning behind the physical and visible material. Also in 1 John 4:11 John says "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.12, No one has ever seen God' but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us"—this text covers the whole mission of God and its interpretations tell us to genuinely give our sacrifices without any kind of hypocrisy. It was the conflicting line between Jesus and the high priests at that time who claimed to be most holy, respect seasons of sacrifice but were not spiritually, socially, morally and politically considered acceptable. Jesus commanded this point to avoid any hypocritical prayers or gifts that would not then be acceptable to God.

God's mission in the world is a reconciling mission and that is why He reconciles the whole world to himself and those who believe in him must not be divided but united and advocates for peace and reconciliation. For us to be truly children of God who love him and adore him alone, we must be united and reconciled with one another.

Consider James 4 v1-3

Where do the conflicts and where a do the quarrels among you come from? Is it not from this, b from your passions that battle inside you? c 2 You desire and you do not have; you murder and envy and you cannot obtain; you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask; 3 you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, so you can spend it on your passions

5. Particularly thinking of the first reading how does the way you live your life affect the way others live theirs?

In the world, many people learn and copy from other people's daily lives. Some examples could be those who through education, spiritual mentors, and social interactions, as Mothers and Fathers, relatives and our leaders that one life affects another.

The way we live always does two things, either affect other people negatively or positively. Attempting to live peacefully can affect people positively an effect that can spread.

6. In South Sudan many resources are in short supply and poverty is wide spread the government struggles to cope with this. How can these factors affect people's willingness to fight?

Many people of South Sudan unreservedly fought a prolonged civil war with the hope that when liberation and self-government was achieved life will change and never be the same again, there will be quality education accessible by all, dowry for marriages will be kept at reasonable and affordable levels, safe drinking water for humans and animals will be provided by our South Sudanese government, poverty will be completely alleviated and land will be owned by the community.

But to their surprise, the independence of South Sudan brought numerous challenges and problems. Things become scarce and water points have become even more scarce. Land has become a very important and valuable asset, owned by the government contrary to peoples expectations, poverty has even increased by double.

South Sudan is fertile with much natural resources available but there is lower capacity in poor populations, they do not have the required skills to utilize those resources efficiently so that there is enough for everybody.

Marriages which were communally shared, where every family member makes a contribution has significantly changed to be a one man duty and this has greatly encouraged and promoted cattle rustling because young men want to get married without family support but lack enough head of cows and hence they always resort to cattle rustling so that they get rich in one day and get married the following day. Marriages are no longer communally owned and shared together as a families' duty, but as an individual's duty. A few rich people have made marriage more expensive than anything else, from 300-500 head of cows, but a poor young man cannot afford this. It is a great contributor to cattle rustling and fighting in many places where you hear of ethnic groups fighting.

Sense of single ownership/individualism

Many people have been enlightened by modern ways of living, an independent life, individualism and hence they have developed a sense of property ownership unlike older days when things were communally owned and shared together. When the time came for a young man to get married it was unquestionably and legally a family duty, failure to communally do that can bring disgrace and shame to that particular family. Sources of water were available in plenty but these days many water sources are filled up and probably global warming has contributed to this and at the same time has resulted in communal conflict over scarce water points used by cattle pastoralists and nomadic communities.

This has resulted to severe poverty and people grumble over fewer and more scarce resources. South Sudanese had a "communal" culture that was cherished, everything was owned by community, family and clan, so it was hard to singly own something but

everything belonged to everybody. But after independence, civilization brings in challenges. Many people's eyes have opened and feel they should own anything on their own, grumbling starts. There are more consumers with only a little number of producers, agricultural production has reduced to the lowest level, many people have migrated to towns loitering with no work or even no money. Survival raises high dependency culture making it more difficult to alleviate poverty.

7. Many people in South Sudan have experience of combat and the terrible effects of war, few have ever had counselling. After living so long with war no one knows what peace looks like. What can be done to make peace more than just an absence of fighting?

I sometimes forget the personal effects of war on me when I see many other people with visible effects of war, behaving in a way that vividly shows anybody how much damage was caused to them by war. The civil war in Sudan has done a lot of damage or changed people's thinking such as social, cultural, economic, physical, intellectual and spiritual life. To bring these physically challenged and divided beings into its wholeness, churches and government must establish institutions for the long and short term for informal training to help those who are physically challenged so that they are not only regaining their normal being but to contribute to nation building.

Vocational trainings centres must be encouraged where those physically challenged can be trained to gain skills so that they become self-supporting.

8. What is Jesus saying in the last passage? Should we always give in to evil?

Our natural reaction is to strike back at such people or at least to stop doing anything good to them. Let us here see what Jesus says about this, he calls us to take a remarkably different course of action. *" But I tell you who hear me, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you... then your reward will be great and you will be sons the Most High because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful just as your father is merciful"* (Luke 6:27-28,35-36) It was a Jewish law to take revenge even Pharisees were very strict on this, and especially during the time they were under Roman rule whom they so much hated. They could not understand how a person being offended turns the other cheek to be slapped, they think of their relationship with the Romans, so it was normal to retaliate to any perpetrator, they prided themselves as being the ones who knew and upheld the law. They strove to cultivate a spiritual reawakening in the people of Israel through strict observance of the law and gained the favour and respect of the majority as a result, but Jesus here vividly refused us to retaliate and not take the law into our hands. Instead do good to those who do us bad, and let justice

prevail when people see us doing good to those who do us bad, in fact the more a person does good things to his/her offender it puts a great shame and guilt back to the offender. The Bible says, do not take revenge, my friends but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: *"It is mine to avenge, I will repay"* says the Lord. On the contrary: *"If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head"* Do not be overcome by the evil, but overcome evil with good. This is a command from God that we should do good to our enemies no matter how great the offence committed against us. In 1 Peter 3:v9; it says *"do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessings, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessings"* The Bible completely refuses revenge or giving in to evil by doing the same act done against us, instead we should do good things to our enemies and in doing so we shall inherit the heavenly kingdom.

9. Do Christians have a role in sustaining peace?

Jesus Christ brought peace between humanity and God after the fall of man. Therefore, Christians have a great role in sustaining peace. In fact a sustainable peace is a peace that is genuinely grounded in Christian's principles and values. In Matthew 5:9 The Beatitudes, Jesus says, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God"* therefore, it is a Christians' duty to initiate peace and be ambassadors of peace where conflicts arise either in a family, a country with another countries or individuals. Christians have a role to play in bringing a sustainable peace by ensuring that conflict affected nations are reconciled and live at peace with one another.

Let us look into Genesis 13:7 Abram and Lot disagreed and separated. We can learn something in this text, *"and quarrelling arose between Abram's herders and Lot's"*. You know the story, facing potential conflict with his Nephew Lot, Abram took the initiative in settling the disputes, He gave Lot first choice even though Abram being older, had the patriarchal right to choose first and willingness to risk being cheated. It shows us:

1. We take initiative in resolving family conflict
2. Put family peace above personal desire.

Therefore, Christians must always try to make peace no matter how difficult the situation, peace helps even individuals to be at peace in their minds, hearts and with others.

Sustainable peace promotes physical and personal development instead of destruction, even spiritual growth and development. Let us look how wars in Sudan had seriously devastated South Sudan in particular, lots of destruction happened, human lives were lost, in South Sudan Christians and traditionalists became apostate because of the fear of being killed for their faith. They deserted their religious beliefs because of war and devastation. All this would not have happened if there was a sustainable peace. Sudan and South Sudan have signed so many peace agreements but the question is, are these peace agreements a

sustainable Peace? I can say they are not because there are still many border related conflicts, Sudan accuses South Sudan of allegedly supporting rebels and vis-à-vis.

10. Is there anything that you can do as a person to help build peace or reduce the causes of fighting?

We are all peacemakers as Jesus said in Matthew 5:9 *“Blessed are peacemakers they will be called children of God”* Christians all over the world have a divine task to be *“peace makers”* in the world where peace is lacking, I know many nations lack peace even as individuals. As Christians we must always promote peace through our personal relations and peaceful co-existence with other people. In Romans 12:18 Saint Paul says, if it’s possible as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone, which means with all people including those who are considered as being our enemies. If we love someone the way Christ loves us, we may be willing to forgive. If we have experienced God’s grace, we will want to pass it on to others. (Eph 2:11-18) This Peace which is often referred to as *“unity”* (psalm 133:1) is not the absence of conflict and war but is a presence of genuine harmony, personal peace of mind. Not a hostile mind as it is very common to find here in South Sudan. Understanding, love, and good will between people or nations is God’s call to all of us to live at peace at all times.

Peace is important especially to Christians, let us again look how Jesus gave a commands that if you are offering your gift and you remember you have a grudge against your brother, you must reconcile with him or her first before you give your gift at the altar. Can you see how important it is to have peace with another here on earth even for your gift to be accepted by God in Heaven. All nations have roles to play to ensure that sustainable peace is restored where conflicts reigns.

Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

“This weeks’ session teaches two things. First, it is likely that the cause of an argument may be us, through our actions or our ignorance. Second, we can all take a part in making peace a reality. Jesus taught the critical importance of not allowing hatred to go unresolved.

Jesus makes it very plain that ultimately there is a price to pay for our actions, both now on Earth and later before God. The way we live defines us and influences the way others live. Arguments are a fact of life but they do not need to lead to violence or hatred.

How many lives could be saved or improved by simply knowing this?

Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

“Dear Lord God thank you for your unconditional love you have graciously given us even when we fight against neighbours, friends, or kill one another you still love us dearly. Lord I pray you help us realize what “causes fighting” is our unmet human desires, help us Lord so that our human desires as a manifestation of a work of flesh do not bring us into conflict and fighting as we are one family and your children. Heavenly father I pray you hear our sincere contrite hearts and bring in us a genuine love, care for one another so that we that we do not become too much a self-centred community but a caring family of God. We pray God to bring a complete transformation in our hearts so that we love others even when we are hurt, abandon hatred to solve all our human differences understandably and lovingly.

I also pray that this small “Lent Course” work initiative from Wau Diocese will be a blessing to those who will read it, help them know that fighting is not the best but forgiveness as our Lord Jesus taught us not to revenge is the best way in solving our conflicts, disagreements and differences. Sometime it is hard to accept it but it’s a command from God. There are so many inter-communal and tribal conflicts especially in South Sudan, communities resorted to fighting, scramble over limited resources but God I pray that you totally change in our lives and negative attitudes that we may have against one another in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen”

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

For the Week Ahead

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

“In the coming week think about things that have caused arguments for you. How were they settled? could they have been settled better? Are you holding a grudge or a hatred for someone that is getting in the way of your relationship with God? Do your own actions condemn you? Pray about that this week and look for peace.”

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

Lent Course Week 2 Leaders Notes

Beating Violence

By Mary John – Diocesan MU Coordinator

Translated by Kekulina Edith – MU LFEP Worker

Read the Gospel account below:

John 8: 1-12

1. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts; where all the people gathered round him, and he sat down to teach them. 3. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group. 4. And said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5. In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” 6. They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his figure. 7. When they kept on questioning him he straightened up and said to them, if any one of you is without sin, let him be first to throw a stone at her.” 8. Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9. At this, those who heard began to go away one at time, the older ones first, until only Jesus remained. 10. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “woman where are they? Has no one condemned you? 11.” No one, Sir” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin”

Setting the Scene

In South Sudan there are two things done for domestic violence to be reduced. These are first to the violators then to the violated ones.

- Punishment is always given to those who violate others rights in order to set an example to rest who plan to violate the rights of others.
- A fine is imposed on the violators and some end up with imprisonment and some being hung. But all this is to scare others from doing the same.
- To the one whose rights are violated there is counselling and a refund to solve their psychology treatment for the ones who are hurt and for general Biblical teaching to all people about the effects of Domestic violence.



- However, even in the Bible we also see domestic violence occur as in the passage above. Here two people were caught committing adultery but instead judging both by the Law they only took the woman and left the man which is unfair.

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.

- 1. Why did Jesus go to the Mount of Olives?**
- 2. Why was the woman brought to the law?**
- 3. Why did the teachers of the law and Pharisees want to trap Jesus?**
- 4. How did Jesus escape accusation from the teachers of the law and the Pharisees?**
- 5. How would you feel if it was you in the situation of that woman?**
- 6. What do we learn from the story of this woman?**
- 7. What does Jesus say about adultery according to the Scriptures?**
- 8. What is Domestic Violence? How is it seen in society?**
- 9. Why does South Sudan have so many problems?**
- 10. What does the Bible say about equality?**

Summing Up

Violence against women is the most wide spread human rights violation in the world today, but in most cultures it is seen as normal. It is often un-seen, unreported, and un-considered to the extent that women and girls have such a low esteem that they often accept violence. Women and girls who do speak up are often ignored or punished.

Some people use the Bible to suggest that violence is justified, and that suffering from violence is even part of Gods plan.

We need to challenge these ideas, if we are to eliminate violence and restore value and respect to each human life as God intended. There can be no peace without this.

Pray together:

“Our Father who is in Heaven full of love and mercy, forgive us all our transgressions, lead us and guide us with a thousand angels and open our sight, understanding and give us wisdom as your Son is wisdom. You are Jehovah Provider and Jehovah Shalom, we bless you and glorify you in the name of the Trinity.

Amen”

For the Week Ahead

“In the coming week think about the way you see other people in your society and how you treat them. Do we always show others the mercy and equality that God shows us? Pray about that this week.”

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
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Lent Course Week 2 Leaders Notes

Beating Violence

By Mary John – Diocesan MU Coordinator

Translated by Kekulina Edith – MU LFEP Worker



Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and prayed for each other. Then share the Gospel account below:

John 8: 1-12

1. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts; where all the people gathered round him, and he sat down to teach them. 3. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group. 4. And said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5. In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” 6. They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his figure. 7. When they kept on questioning him he straightened up and said to them, if any one of you is without sin, let him be first to throw a stone at her.” 8. Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9. At this, those who heard began to go away one at time, the older ones first, until only Jesus remained. 10. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “woman where are they? Has no one condemned you? 11.” No one, Sir” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin”

Setting the Scene

In South Sudan there are two things done for domestic violence to be reduced. These are first to the violators then to the violated ones.

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- However, even in the Bible we also see domestic violence occur as in the passage above. Here two people were caught committing adultery but instead judging both by the Law they only took the woman and left the man which is unfair.

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.

1. Why did Jesus go to the Mount of Olives?

A mountain is a spiritual place. For example there are the eight steps of faith in Mathew 5:1-12 which takes place on a mountain. Mountains are places of power, when God wanted to give the Ten Commandments to Moses he used the mountain called Sinai. when God called Abraham to inform him to go and sacrifice Isaac to him he called him on a mountain. We see Jesus going to many mountains every time he needs privacy for prayers. In Mathew 5:1 Jesus goes to the mountain side sat down and began teaching. Jesus used the Mount of Olives many times, see Matthew 21:1, John 8:1. Most of the time Jesus went to mountains as in Mark 9:2, Mathew 17:9 Mathew 8:1 but all these were about the work of God. Jesus had gone to do God's work.

2. Why was the woman brought to the law?

- Without law, there would be no sin.
- Laws guide us and show us a right way to go. It is laws that condemn people.

In the time of Moses the law said that adulteresses should be stoned to death. People took the laws of Moses to be the overall guide for living. Their behaviour was dictated by this, but when Christ came he did not change the law but fulfilled it and again made it very easy by putting himself forward to be the path. An example can be seen Roman 8:1-3.

3. Why did the teachers of the law and Pharisees want to trap Jesus?

Jesus in his life, was sinless and he was the son of God, which the Pharisees could not accept because it challenged their beliefs. So in whatever Jesus was doing they were looking for a way to challenge and stop his ministry. They wanted also to accuse him so that his ambitions should not be fulfilled.

- Jesus ministry, character, speech, anger, or happiness was not recognized by the Pharisees.
- Take an example of Mark 14:55, and Mathew 26:59 in which the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. It is a mark of his authority

4. How did Jesus escape accusation from the teachers of the law and the Pharisees?

The Pharisees were searching for something to use as a loop hole to accuse Jesus, so here they asked him “what do you say?” they could then judge him by his answer. If he is the son of God and commanded them to stone the woman, they would accuse him saying he has killed. If he did not then they would accuse him of abandoning the law of Moses. But since Jesus himself is wisdom, the wisdom let him know how to answer them, saying if anyone is without sin let them be the first to throw a stone at her. Who in all honesty could say they had no sin and what would Jesus say then if any declared that they had none? they all went away. Jesus did not change the law.

5. How would you feel if it was you in the situation of that woman?

The woman committed adultery yes, she was caught and taken to Jesus, of which we do not know the mode of the woman, was she crying, quiet, quarrelling, fighting those who took her or was she humble. But the fact that this woman was taken alone, if I was the one, I would feel like the man also should be brought, why?, because in the law of Moses it says both the partners who commit adultery should be stoned to death

6. What do we learn from the story of this woman?

We should not judge others, we are also sinners. Jesus was not only in the world to teach the good news but also to teach us how to behave towards the fellow human beings.

- We learn to admit the crime and confess. For it is when we admit and confess our sins that we can be forgiven.
- We learn self examination 1 cor. 11:28-29. Supposing they stoned the woman they would have judged themselves.

7. What does Jesus say about adultery according to the Scriptures?

In Mathew 5:27 Jesus said that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- In Verse 32b Jesus says a man is not allowed to divorce his wife except for marital unfaithfulness, that causes her to become an adulterous and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

8. What is Domestic Violence? How is it seen in society?

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner.

To women it happens in many ways such as Sexual abuse where women experience marital rape in marriages by their partners are forced to have intercourse, sometimes being beaten before the action. Physical abuse when a woman is over worked to the extent that they have less hours for resting. They are beaten some being hit some being bitten and slapped. Women are denied medical care and good food such as chicken, liver or eggs, which causes deformity and even a high rate of mortality. Some women end up having no food because of serving it all to the partner. Women are also denied financial rights, the partner grabs income in cases of business denies further studies, official jobs and even any employment. This causes an economic let down for women. Girls are often intimidated to abort pregnancies, which leads to chronic bleeding, infertility and even death. Girls are denied education. It is in very few parts of South Sudan where girls' education is considered. They are made to be materials for getting wealth (such as Cattle or resources). Many are also being forced into not only getting married to old men but also early marriages and end up being frustrated when the supply is less sometimes with harassing from co wives or when the husband is drunkard or drug addict.

Children are an important part of the family that needs special care as part of a developing and health nation. In South Sudan children's rights are being violated in severe ways, this is by the parents, guardians, neighbours, relatives, teachers children are sometimes being used as sacrifices to evil spirits, some in water underground in other business sectors like Industries, factories big restaurants and hotels, super markets

and even for big buildings for the reason of riches. This is what causes a number of children to be lost from families. Children being beaten, kicked, hit, undressed, unfed, denied movement, studies and happiness in life. These cause Psychological trauma to children and more so from the age of two years.

Orphans in South Sudan have no peace because their rights are violated. Most of the orphans whose mothers died tend to suffer much more than those whose father died.

9. Why does South Sudan have so many problems?

Most violence takes place or occurs because the people are unconscious for example alcoholics can beat, hit harshly, abuse or even kill when he is unaware. Domestic violence in South Sudan occurs because of a lack of consideration for the feelings or rights of others. This is sometimes due to tribalism and cultural pride. There is a lack of education which leads to a lack of qualifications leading to a lack of employment opportunities, causing poverty ending up in hunger thus causing domestic violence to occur when there is no food in the house. No peace but fights, quarrels and misunderstanding.

Greed can break the family. More so when a man is greedy, then the wife needs patience and grace for her to endure and stay.

Revenge, some people are violated in need of revenge to other people, for example if a man kills a person relatives may feel the need to have revenge for the family by killing the strong person in that family. Yet that person may be innocent.

Covetousness causes violation of women and girls plus children to occur through rape, defilement, and also theft.

Domestic violence also occurs in South Sudan because of the string of oppressive cultural beliefs and practices whereby there is no chance of argument or rebellion. Culturally there is a lack of access to social standing, decision making and participation. This is another cause of violence to increase because of the ignorance of people.

10. What does the Bible say about equality?

- God is mighty, but does not despise men. He does not keep the wicked alive but afflicts their rights he does not take his eyes from the righteous. - **Job 36: 5-11.** (Here God does not segregate between men and women or even children but he treats them equally.)

- Therefore, remember that formally you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “The Circumcised”. At that time you were separated from Christ, but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. This shows Jesus having mercy to all the people who call themselves the Circumcised” and the “uncircumcised” - **Ephesians 2:11-13.**
- Because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. Ephesians 6:8. Still in verse 9 he continues to advise masters to treat their slaves in the same way, not to threaten them since God in heaven is the master of all of them. - **Colossians 4:1**
- No longer as a slave, but better than a slave as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you as a brother in The Lord. - **Philemon 1: 13-16**
- You were bought at a price, do not become slaves of man. Brother, each man, as responsible to God should remain in situation God called him to. - **1 Corinthians 7:23-24.**

Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

Violence against women is the most wide spread human rights violation in the world today, but in most cultures it is seen as normal. It is often un-seen, unreported, and un-considered to the extent that women and girls have such a low esteem that they often accept violence. Women and girls who do speak up are often ignored or punished.

Some people use the Bible to suggest that violence is justified, and that suffering from violence is even part of Gods plan.

We need to challenge these ideas, if we are to eliminate violence and restore value and respect to each human life as God intended. There can be no peace without this.

Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

“Our Father who is in Heaven full of love and mercy, forgive us all our transgressions, lead us and guide us with a thousand angels and open our sight, understanding and give us wisdom as your Son is wisdom. You are Jehovah Provider and Jehovah Shalom, we bless you and glorify you in the name of the Trinity.

Amen”

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

For the Week Ahead

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

“In the coming week think about the way you see other people in your society and how you treat them. Do we always show others the mercy and equality that God shows us? Pray about that this week.”

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

Lent Course Week 3

Tribal Fighting

By Rev Peter Angui Akook



Please read the Gospel accounts below taken from Matthew Chapter 18.

Verse 15

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault when the two of you are alone. If he listens to you, you have regained your brother.

Verses 21 - 35

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³ “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

- 1. Have you ever had an argument with a brother or sister that you later bitterly regretted?**
- 2. What do you think a tribe is? How important is a tribe to someone's identity?**
- 3. How does the story of different ranking servants relate to the relationships that tribes often have with one another?**
- 4. What do you think that tribes fight over in South Sudan?**
- 5. In the story the master showed mercy, why didn't the servant?**
- 6. What do you think is the effect of tribal fighting on daily life?**
- 7. Is there a better way to live without fighting?**
- 8. The story warns us to forgive, how might this work in practice on the ground?**
- 9. How can we apply this lesson to our daily lives?**

Pray together:

“Lord and Father forgive us and give us the grace to forgive others. Let us open our hearts to see that in your eyes we are one family, one tribe and one people that should not be holding each another to account. Give us the courage to live in peace with one another, share what we have, so that no one need go without. Help us to break down barriers of prejudice that separate us and reach out to those who need our help. Grant us the strength to see where we are wrong, to grow in your love and follow the examples set for us by Jesus.

Amen”

For the Week Ahead

“In the coming week think about the way you understand the world and try to see where you fit in to the groups or tribes about you. Are you holding on to a debt that you could really forgive? Or do you know someone else that is. Pray about that this week.”

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

Lent Course Week 3 Leaders Notes

Tribal Fighting



By Rev Peter Angui Akook

Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and pray for each other. Then share the Gospel accounts below taken from Matthew Chapter 18.

Verse 15

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault when the two of you are alone. If he listens to you, you have regained your brother.

Verses 21 - 35

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³ "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.

1. Have you ever had an argument with a brother or sister that you later bitterly regretted?

Yes, there is always a continued argument between a brother and a sister over the ownership and possession of resources. Hatred and jealousy are always the factors that move one person into an argument because a failed person is not happy with the successful one who is able to mobilise natural resources in possession. Such a person is often regrets once he/she owns something after a long bitter argument that he/she doesn't labour for. As a proverb man called Geng Geng once said "a food that is gained by trickery is good for a while but after few moments it becomes like sorghum mixed with sand". But at this juncture we need to come back and be reconciled or restored in a Christian relationship as stated in Matthew 18:15.

2. What do you think a tribe is? How important is a tribe to someone's identity?

- a) A tribe is a group of people with one language and one religion. For instance, the longest war in Sudan was started with an issue of tribes when the Khartoum regime put up a slogan of one language and one religion. In other word, it was an issue of "Arabization" and "Islamization" in the country far and wide as the language was Arabic and the religion Islam. But in this case, we are people with many different languages but with one religion in Christ. We are always proud to say that we are Christians worldwide as one identity.

- b) A tribe makes someone feel that he/she is special, unique, superior, acknowledged and being able to identify to where he/she belongs. It shows belonging and common interest of the group. Our biggest tribe nowadays is Christianity worldwide rather than our minor tribes such as Dinka, Nuer, Shiluk, Murle, Bari, Zande, Pari, Lotuko, Luo, Moro, Avokaya, Baka, Mundu, Toposa, etc.

3. How does the story of different ranking servants relate to the relationships that tribes often have with one another?

Different ranking servants always find it hard listening to the lower profile people for they believe that low profile people are incompetent, lacking experience and lacking the knowledge to share ideas, views and opinions with them. Also, to approach other ranking servants is another very complicated thing to do, they said that to be with a low profile person is a waste of time. It is in this manner that ranking servants are ruling people with commands, orders, decrees etc. But it is often believed that “ones mind is a gourd”. Listening and forgiving is very key as stated in the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 18:27. The master has compassion on his servant because he had listened to the condition of his servant and therefore he forgave him. There is no human being who is believed to be like an empty bottle. “Listening” is very important and a crucial action that leads to forgiveness.

4. What do you think that tribes fight over in South Sudan?

Tribes in South Sudan fight over resources such as toch or pasture where cattle graze, rivers where people could fish and the land where people can cultivate and build houses for living. Toch, rivers and land are the major factors that are creating disputes and conflicts between tribes. The biggest question is the question of ownership of such resources and therefore, fighting may arise because one tribe wants to claim ownership of those resources in possession. In my opinion our tribes in South Sudan must learn what is called a shared property in common, to avoid disputes and conflicts. Forgiving and forgetting the past just as the master did it with his servant who failed to pay the debt. Another agenda involved in South Sudanese tribal fighting is the issue of popularity where one tribe would want to be acknowledged as mighty warriors and superior over the rest of the tribes. But gaining popularity cannot be done through killing people, because who would then acknowledge you later as a mighty warrior after you have cleared away all the people? While these are the same people whom you want to be popular with. Popularity is gained through good deeds. Like John S. Mbiti the African scholar who wrote a lot of books on the subject of African beliefs and traditions. He is a well known person who has gained popularity without killing people.

5. In the story the master showed mercy, why didn't the servant?

The servant didn't show mercy because he is not faithful and trustworthy but a troublesome person. As such he should have taken an example from his master who had forgiven his own debt. The servant failed in accountability to his master and failed to forgive others as well. In simple terms this servant wants to create a chaotic environment rather than peaceful environment while the master wants peace.

6. What do you think is the effect of tribal fighting on daily life?

The effect of tribal fighting on daily life is stress, trauma, destruction, disability, vulnerability, reduction of people or resources and backwards development. In this case the minds of most people would be occupied by a lot of stresses and are left with traumas that could be a cause of more fighting. However, there is daily destruction of belongings and disability takes place from both sides of the conflict when fighting with one another. Tribal fighting causes a reduction of the population in the areas of conflict and therefore family remnants are left with severe vulnerability and will have to think of the way forward without loved ones that are killed. This is often a massive burden in a culture that relies on manual work for survival. With tribal fighting, people are always backward because there is no room for discussion, forums, dialogue or debate between tribes to work out possibilities for developments that would solve their disagreements. It is more likely that rigid and stagnant opinions in one position force people to define themselves as opposing others rather than being open to solutions.

7. Is there a better way to live without fighting?

A better way to live without fighting is through forgiveness and sharing of belongings in common without distinction. It happened to Bishop Nathaniel Garang Anyieth of Bor Diocese. A thief came in his house secretly to steal at night. That thief was fortunate to have found fifty (50 kg) of sorghum which was too heavy for him to lift up on his shoulder. Bishop Nathaniel came out from his bed to see what is happening; he found that a thief was struggling to lift up the sorghum. To the thief's surprise, Bishop Nathaniel helped him lift up the bag on his shoulder instead of fighting him. All departed in peace.

8. The story warns us to forgive, how might this work in practice on the ground?

In practice on the ground forgiveness would be achieved when different communities come together to discuss their grievances and be reconciled. This just happened in Gogrial recently. Representatives of Awiel South, Awiel East, Twich, Gogrial East and Gogrial West signed a collaborative agreement among themselves in order to avoid differences and disputes between neighbouring communities. Now these communities that were fighting are moving freely from county to county without any complicated issues. They have forgiven whatever went on in the past among them and are beginning to live in peace with one another. What happened in Gogrial should be a great example to other communities in South Sudan.

9. How can we apply this lesson to our daily lives?

We can apply this lesson to our daily lives through simplifying ourselves and being ready to listen to anybody regardless of who they are. Simplicity and listening are the key motives helping people live in peace and harmony with one another rather than being proud. It was clearly stated by South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu “there is no future without forgiveness”. South Sudanese people (and people all over the world) need to care for the future by forgiving each other now. Peace needs to prevail in South Sudan while conflict and disputes need to fade away. There is a need to imitate the actions of the master who forgave his servant. It is this forgiveness that Jesus asked from his father during his last prayer on the cross that “Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing”. When we say the Lord’s Prayer, let us mean it whole heartedly when saying “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”.

In the South Sudanese constitution, there is a statement of “freedom of worship and expression” this is particularly set such that people may have an opportunity to avoid disputes and conflicts.

Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

“This weeks’ Gospel really highlights two things. First is the awesome power of forgiveness and the change that it can bring in an instant. Second is the sadness of human nature not to always make the most use of this powerful tool. Jesus came to us bearing teaching and forgiveness, both of which he distributed freely.

Just as in the parable we all live in communities with different levels of authority and power with the resources available always needing to be shared in one way or another. This is seen in the story by people owing debts to one another. Without forgiveness we are forced to keep an account of who owes us, whether that is loyalty, money, land or blood. In South Sudan and elsewhere in the world resources can be shared peacefully and to the benefit of all. Some might call this common sense, but in practice it starts with an act of forgiveness.

How many lives could be saved and improved by this simple deed?

Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

“Lord and Father forgive us and give us the grace to forgive others. Let us open our hearts to see that in your eyes we are one family, one tribe and one people that should not be holding each another to account. Give us the courage to live in peace with one another, share what we have, so that no one need go without. Help us to break down barriers of prejudice that separate us and reach out to those who need our help. Grant us the strength to see where we are wrong, to grow in your love and follow the examples set for us by Jesus.

Amen”

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

For the Week Ahead

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

“In the coming week think about the way you understand the world and try to see where you fit in to the groups or tribes about you. Are you holding on to a debt that you could really forgive? Or do you know someone else that is. Pray about that this week.”

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

Lent Course Week 4

Seeking Peace

By Rev Peter Angui Akook

Please read the Bible accounts below.



Matthew Chapter 7 Verse 24 - 27

Build Your House on the Rock

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. **26** And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Matthew Chapter 7 Verse 7 - 11

Ask, and It Will Be Given

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **8** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. **9** Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? **10** Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? **11** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

Romans Chapter 8 Verses 1- 6

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **2** For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. **3** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. **5** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. **6** For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Setting the Scene

Due to our situation the fact is that “attitudes influence actions”. South Sudan has undergone the bitter experience of the longest war in Africa for some decades. South Sudanese society is used to violent acts in life. People resorted to either physical violence, psychological violence or verbal violence in disciplining others. It was because anything could be imposed on others by force. This has led to the acts of revenge in cycles. There was at this time never any single sign of hope that one day anything good would come as a result of this longest war struggle. There was nothing, no schools, no infrastructure or buildings for living and no agricultural schemes for food production were in place. Attitudes and the thinking of the people in South Sudan became miserable and negatively impacted on society leading increasingly only to violence as a result.

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

- 1. What do you think is the meaning of the parable of the men that built houses on rock and sand?**
- 2. Many things must be built and rebuilt in South Sudan because of the civil war that lasted so long, many live in poverty. Does living in a country that lacks so much affect the people living there?**
- 3. What does Jesus mean by ask, how can we ask?**
- 4. Are there things we can give to help each other in life?**
- 5. What does it mean to live according to the spirit?**
- 6. What social problems may be faced by people that have always know times of war and hardship, how may this shape society?**

7. How does the way a society develops affect the development of a country?
8. How can people be given a positive role model to show them that life can change and become better than it is?
9. Does peace instantly make life better or is hard work required?
10. How much does education affect the development of peace?

Summing Up

It cannot be overstated that the trauma of a long conflict reaches deep in to people, far beyond anything that can be seen. So many of the things that make life normal are stripped away and gone that it is no wonder people behave in a way that is not normal.

People do not always believe that life can improve and think that the way things are is the way they will always be. Jesus gave us many examples of how to live trusting in God and makes it very plain that life can be different. Accepting Jesus gives us all hope.

Living according to the spirit allows God to set you as an example to others so that change can be seen and copied. Making use of our own talents and encouraging education are two ways forward to help those in need. Ask yourself a question, if we are seeking peace in society can it be found in you?

Pray together:

God our heavenly Father, we fall short of the glory of God. We need your heavenly intervention into our current affairs of the nation that seems to be falling apart.

We are not caring enough for your people's lives Lord but we believe you do care for them so much more than we claim to be doing. Let us not be experiencing the state of war for ever. Help us to restore our brotherhood and sisterhood, fatherhood and motherhood in this young nation of South Sudan. So God help South Sudan to develop itself in peace and harmony, prosperity and unity. In Jesus name

Amen.

For the Week Ahead

"In the coming week think about these things. Is your life built on rock or Sand? Do you live according to the spirit? What could you do to make your society better? Does the way you live give an example of peace to others? Are you seeking peace or trapped in an unending war of hatred?"

**"May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen."**

Lent Course Week 4 Leaders Notes

Seeking Peace

By Rev Peter Angui Akook

Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and pray for each other. Then share the Bible accounts below.



Matthew Chapter 7 Verse 24 - 27

Build Your House on the Rock

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. **26** And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

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Setting the Scene

Due to our situation the fact is that “attitudes influence actions”. South Sudan has undergone the bitter experience of the longest war in Africa for some decades. South Sudanese society is used to violent acts in life. People resorted to either physical violence, psychological violence or verbal violence in disciplining others. It was because anything could be imposed on others by force. This has led to the acts of revenge in cycles. There was at this time never any single sign of hope that one day anything good would come as a result of this longest war struggle. There was nothing, no schools, no infrastructure or buildings for living and no agricultural schemes for food production were in place. Attitudes and the thinking of the people in South Sudan became miserable and negatively impacted on society leading increasingly only to violence as a result.

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.

1. What do you think is the meaning of the parable of the men that built houses on rock and sand?

There are 6 types of characteristics for rocks and minerals. They are:

- **Hardness** is a measure of the mineral's resistance to being scratched, the hardness scale is how we measure the hardness.
- **Lustre** some minerals are shiny and some are dull, lustre means metallic or non metallic.
- **Colour** is an important property of a mineral and helps identify a mineral but doesn't totally identify it.
- **Crystal Structure** is another way to figure out what type of rock or mineral it is. The mineral or rock must have straight edges, flat sides, and regular angles.
- **Streak** refers to the colour powder that the mineral leaves after it scratches it.
- **Cleavage** and fracture is a way the mineral breaks and fracture is a breakage is rough and has jagged edges.

The meaning of the parable is that any person who comes to Jesus, hears Jesus' words and does them is considered to be a “wise” person who is like a man who builds a house on rock. But a person who comes and doesn't do the will of God is a “foolish” person who is like a man who builds a house on sand. Knowing about rock tells us it is a wise foundation material. The real meaning of this parable is about “wise” acts and “foolish” acts in society.

2. Many things must be built and rebuilt in South Sudan because of the civil war that lasted so long, many live in poverty. Does living in a country that lacks so much affect the people living there?

Of course, living in a country that lacks so much affect people deeply. This is especially true when people lack basic skills for agricultural activities, for making income generating projects and for construction of infrastructure buildings. Skills which have lapsed through years of conflict. People resort to violence only, which cripples and hinders their mindset on thinking of the progress of our new nation. There is not another good role model for people to imitate apart from one of violence. It would be good if the people of South Sudan drop out this graveyard mentality of fighting each other and instead considered a new era of peace nationwide. South Sudan needs skills for rebuilding its lost capacity to be a nation.

3. What does Jesus mean by ask, how can we ask?

There is a saying that “crying is better than silence”. When someone does not speak a word by his or her own mouth, it would be hard to guess what he or she intended to do. To make your intention known publicly there is a need to speak it out by your own mouth. When someone also needs to be forgiven, there is a need to approach that person whom you need forgiveness from and ask him or her by your own mouth to forgive you. God already knows what is inside us before we speak it out but God wants us to be part of this experience by getting involved practically by using our energy, muscle, tongue and lips to speak out a word. This is just to show how willing and committed you are. We can ask humbly, patiently, persistently, respectfully and in an eager manner. God is always listening, truly we can just ask.

4. Are there things we can give to help each other in life?

There are things we can give to help each other such as advice, material support and spiritual support. There is no human being that is a hundred percent perfect, we all need something. We live by imitating other good ideas and examples. We are improving ourselves by copying others who perform well in life. Jesus Christ is the only perfect son of God whom we should try to imitate. We can help when we advise ourselves according to God’s will and when giving materials and intercessory prayers for others. Helping a person in need builds peace through kindness.

5. What does it mean to live according to the spirit?

To live according to the spirit means to have “love” with God first and the neighbour according to 1Corinthians 13:4-8a. The epistle describes exactly what the spirit does that love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. We already know that love is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must embody love in South Sudan and live by it as properly stated in the epistle of 1Corinthians 13:4-8. When you live this way you are living according to the spirit.

6. What social problems may be faced by people that have always known times of war and hardship, how may this shape society?

The social problems that may face people who have known times of war and hardship are neglect, ignorance, resistance, hesitancy and isolation from one another. This will not lead to better progress of nation building but force things ever backwards. It is my prayer that “backward is never but forward is ever”! To live together helps people reason together and they are able to better able to cater for the future maintenance of society. In this sense people need to see not through the smaller lens of tribalism, clans and nepotism but instead use a larger lens of nationalism and patriotism. But first ask for God’s wisdom and knowledge.

7. How does the way a society develops affect the development of a country?

The way society develops affects the development of a country because there must be a strong solid foundation (like building on a rock) right on the ground or from the grassroots level. The way each society is built up from all different societies into a stronger nation or country depends on a common bond of unity. Their firm stand together against any division or destruction influences the development of the country. A peaceful society builds on a firm foundation, a society that is unified and living according to the spirit is strong and able to develop positively.

8. How can people be given a positive role model to show them that life can change and become better than it is?

People can be given a positive role model to show them that life can change only through “demonstration”. Role models can exactly portray what is needed to be done and how it is done practically. I think it is the reason why Jesus Christ came to this earth and dwelt among us as a human being. He was born naturally and grew up among others. He performed miracles but lived his life as a Man. He was touched and seen physically. He committed no sin and showed us how God wants us to be. We need to demonstrate our talents and gifts so that they are utilized adequately for building a better society and nation. Life can change and become better only when we decide to live with Jesus as our best role model who has committed no sin. We are the role models.

9. Does peace instantly make life better or is hard work required?

Peace in collaboration with hard work instantly makes life better because when there is peace someone may walk freely from place to place. In peace time there is no loss of lives as in war, rather natural death only, no loss of properties to looters, gangs or criminals etc. Working opportunities are without risk but progressing in the new era of peace. Peace gives priority to education, schooling, infrastructure building and food production etc. Jesus said “Peace I leave you”! It is an opportunity that is worth working hard to develop.

10. How much does education affect the development of peace?

Education helps the development of peace through its careful study on the importance and significance of peace. Education generally expands thinking on any subject matter and allows analysis for the best result of the subject. Education such as literacy and financial planning helps people think beyond immediate needs and work with others effectively. Education helps the development of peace in all different walks of life. Peace itself cannot come alone without education being a prime motivator to intervene into a situation of conflict and change it to a peaceful environment. Because education allows people to see clearly and understand far more, it is most needed to complement the development of peace.

Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

It cannot be overstated that the trauma of a long conflict reaches deep in to people, far beyond anything that can be seen. So many of the things that make life normal are stripped away and gone that it is no wonder people behave in a way that is not normal.

People do not always believe that life can improve and think that the way things are is the way they will always be. Jesus gave us many examples of how to live trusting in God and makes it very plain that life can be different. Accepting Jesus gives us all hope.

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Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

God our heavenly Father, we fall short of the glory of God. We need your heavenly intervention into our current affairs of the nation that seems to be falling apart.

We are not caring enough for your people's lives Lord but we believe you do care for them so much more than we claim to be doing. Let us not be experiencing the state of war for ever. Help us to restore our brotherhood and sisterhood, fatherhood and motherhood in this young nation of South Sudan. So God help South Sudan to develop itself in peace and harmony, prosperity and unity. In Jesus name

Amen.

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

For the Week Ahead

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

“In the coming week think about these things. Is your life built on rock or Sand? Do you live according to the spirit? What could you do to make your society better? Does the way you live give an example of peace to others? Are you seeking peace or trapped in an unending war of hatred?”

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

Lent Course Week 5

Slippery Truths

By Rev Peter Angui Akook

Read the Bible accounts below:



Luke 21:20–26

20 “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. 22 For this is the time of punishment in fulfilment of all that has been written. 23 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

Romans 13

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrong doer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Fulfilling the Law Through Love

8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. 11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for

you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.

- 1. What is the general feeling that the passage from Luke gives, what would it be like to live through such an event?**
- 2. Is it right that people or nations should be punished through conflict? Or attacked for political reasons?**
- 3. Do you think that the life you live and where you are affects the way you answered question 2?**
- 4. God requires that we love our neighbours how does this work at a national level?**
- 5. Does every argument between countries need to end in fighting? Is this the best way?**
- 6. The oil in South Sudan is very valuable and important to the nation's development but in 2012 the South Sudanese government cut off its supply to Sudan rather than go to war because an argument over oil. In 2013 the South Sudanese President sacked many Government officials and there was fear of an armed uprising but it did not come. What can we learn from this?**

7. According to the passage from Romans how does God ask us to live as a person?
8. Should we expect a country to behave in the same way as a person and live the way God wants?
9. Why do you think that Jesus talked about the destruction of Jerusalem like this?

Summing Up

“Jesus once famously said “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s but give to God what is God’s.

This weeks readings remind us that conflict is sometimes seen as punishment for wrong doing. They also point us in the right direction by telling us the simple truth that love is the essence of how life should be lived. But how to apply love and let it shape life without becoming weak and how make love a policy of government?

South Sudan is a community with different levels of authority and power with the resources available always needing to be shared in one way or another. So to starve itself rather than fight was a brave decision for a country to make in the face of a national challenge. To reduce government was a brave move that could easily have backfired. The slippery truth is that in South Sudan and elsewhere in the world precious resources such as oil can be shared peacefully and to the benefit of all. Countries don’t need to fight like children. Some might call this common sense, but in practice it starts with forgiveness and requires love as a credible policy. It’s the mark of real peace.

Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

“God our heavenly Father, we are people who don’t comprehend how your plan on each of us is so important and how everyone is important in your own sight. Help us to forgive each other and be ready to reconcile to one another when we wrong others. Teach us to live in humility and simplicity rather than boasting and being proud of our achievements or deeds. See us through dear Lord so that we would be able to live the way God wants us to live and not the way we want as persons. We have been wounded physically, mentally, socially, psychologically and spiritually but with your help God we would recover and get healed.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen”

For the Week Ahead

“In the coming week think about the way that your country behaves. How is the word of God seen in the way it is governed? Where do you fit in to the way policy is shaped for government? Are you giving to God and Caesar? Or just to Caesar? Pray about that this week.”

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

Lent Course Week 5 Leaders Notes

Slippery Truths

By Rev Peter Angui Akook



Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and prayed for each other. Then share the Bible accounts below:

Luke 21:20–26

20 “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. 22 For this is the time of punishment in fulfilment of all that has been written. 23 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

Romans 13

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrong doer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Fulfilling the Law Through Love

8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You

shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. 11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

Allow people to talk and then using the notes for each question draw the discussion to a common answer.

1. What is the general feeling that the passage from Luke gives, what would it be like to live through such an event?

The general feeling from the passage of Luke is that people have to fled and escaped for safety. The situation is so frightening, stressful, frustrated, worrying and confused knowing not what to do. When people are warned with such a strong early warning, people would only end up at an alarmed and panicking situation. The environment is not free then under this heavy attack but wondering and roaming about is most exercising activity to be done. To live through such an event is like not to be there in the first place. You will lose everything. Better to die of natural death before facing such atrocities in life.

2. Is it right that people or nations should be punished through conflict? Or attacked for political reasons?

No, nations should not be punished through conflict but through “love” as stated in Romans 13:8. “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law” This verse may mean not only the absence of killing is the fulfilment of the law but loving one another is the best tool to be used to fulfilled the law. The Ten Commandments are summarizing into two. To love God and one another. The first four commandments are about loving God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. While the last six commandments are about loving our neighbour. I warn every leader not to be motivated politically to the extent of forgetting what God requires of us. Forgetting God results in the fall. In Genesis 3, the fall of human beings was because of disobedience and therefore, the relationship between man and God was lost, the relationship between man and man (neighbour) was also lost and the relationship between men and other creatures was cut off. Well represented religious personnel in the groups of think tanks should

interpret this kind of thinking to the rest who don't know it so that people shouldn't argue and end up in conflict.

3. Do you think that the life you live and where you are affects the way you answered question 2?

The life we live and where we are affects us all emotionally and physically of some sort. Simply because the love that God wants us to partake is not rooted in us with its deeper roots. Love doesn't segregate, love doesn't lie, and love doesn't murder etc. There is often a notion with our leaders that never employ a person who is better than you are even if he/she is qualified in this field for otherwise he/she would over run you. In this scenario, a more qualified person is segregated for fear of overturning the seat. Our leaders In South Sudan need to focus on qualifications rather than friendships and relatives. By doing so, the true love of God would be seen in us and then the existence of peace would prevail in the all corners of the whole world far as wide. Again, there is a belief that in order for someone to win the political will of the people requires them to lie about everything. But lying itself is a sin. In Genesis 3, the serpent lied to Eve that "God doesn't want you to be wise like Him". Also in the Ten Commandments God said do not murder. The best description of love can be found in 1Corinthians 13:4-8."Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there is knowledge, it will pass away

4. God requires that we love our neighbours how does this work at a national level?

At a national level love of a neighbour is not easily made to last because of a self centred focus. People worry about resources and failing ministerial posts. People do love their neighbours not because they are neighbours but because they are a source of income. At national level, it's very rare to see people coming down to the grass root level. Simply because something would be taken from them rather than giving them something to take. At a national level, love is only seen when equal time is given to both non incoming generating and income generating people alike. People need to take care of somebody's life instead of killing others privately for self criticism. Love needs to be seen in everything we do, think and say. Reflections on our thoughts, speeches and actions prove us right or wrong.

5. Does every argument between countries need to end in fighting? Is this the best way?

No, the best way to be followed or adopted by sisterly countries when having an argument is “dialogue”. A country must have records of all its pains or grievances against its neighbour and the process is to summon the head of that state to the table for negotiation. The Sudanese Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was achieved because there was a peace initiative started in 2002 at Machakos all the way through to the 2005 CPA at Naivasha, Nairobi Kenya. One could imagine how many years being spent in fighting the Sudanese government by Southerners and the result was the loss of more than 2.5 million lives. What seems to be helpful in South Sudan’s attaining its independence from the North was “patience and dialogue”. During the six year period (interim period), Khartoum had provoked Juba on many occasions thinking that fighting would erupt so that the conduct of the referendum required as part of the CPA negotiations would be nullified by the international community. Khartoum had bombed most parts of South Sudan (Northern & Western Barh El Gazal and Unity State’s territories). Khartoum had stolen South Sudanese oil (worth about 815 million USD) and was backing militia rebels in the South to sabotage, interrupt, and destabilize the exercise of the right of self-determination during and after the six year period. But, Juba showed patience in this move and did not end up in fighting but in dialogue with the Khartoum government. Patience and dialogue paved the way for South Sudan to self-determination in 2011 on July 9th. This shows that the South had forgiven her sister North whatever had gone wrong or was mistaken between the two countries.

6. The oil in South Sudan is very valuable and important to the nation’s development but in 2012 the South Sudanese government cut off its supply to Sudan rather than go to war because an argument over oil. In 2013 the South Sudanese President sacked many Government officials and there was fear of an armed uprising but it did not come. What can we learn from this?

What we can learn from cutting off the oil supply to Sudan is peace. Cutting the oil supply to Sudan was for several reasons. There was a disagreement between the two countries over oil transit fees that was set very high (\$ 3.6 per barrel) by Khartoum while Juba argued it should be in line with the international laws of \$ 1 per barrel. This has been negotiated over again and again in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). But Khartoum thought that losing its territorial rights to South Sudanese oil with a lower transit fee would cause damage to its territory and decided to refuse. Juba similarly had the same attitude not to give heed to that high demand for later on there would be insufficient money needed for development, such as Tarmac roads linking the ten states of South Sudan, schools and hospitals not yet constructed, electricity, clean drinking water and mobile phone networks. No civil servant payroll system was yet set up, government staff salaries were non existant etc. The question was who

wants to benefit from the oil revenue more than whom? There was expected to be fighting over the oil but Juba was not willing to fight but wanted negotiations that lead to the suspension of oil flow through Sudanese territory while trying to find alternative countries rather than Sudan to transport their oil through. In the series of talks in Addis Ababa there was a loss of trust between the two countries alike on the matter. The sacking of many government officials by the president with no an armed uprising was because the sacking didn't intend for bad but for the betterment of the country. If this move were to be seen as tribalism, civilians would have protested against the idea from the president and an armed uprising would have taken place. Government institutions (ministries) were far too large and beyond control, which could cripple our young nation's rapid development. As such ministries were shortened and reduced from 29 to 18. Therefore, money meant for the cancelled ministries was then allocated to meet other developmental projects throughout the country. Perhaps, the less obvious way is sometimes best.

7. According to the passage from Romans how does God ask us to live as a person?

The passage from Romans asks us to live as servants of God. In order to be a servant of God, one must need to be in total subjection to the governing authority. Because every authority is instituted by God. However, if one rejects authority, one rejects God who appointed authority and would suffer judgement. There is a need to give respect to those who deserve to be given respect and honour to who deserves it too.

8. Should we expect a country to behave in the same way as a person and live the way God wants?

We should expect a country to behave the way God wants. We could look at the Israelites who were warned by God several times. God said "hear O Israel the Lord your God the is the one Lord". This was meaning that God only is the one who deserve to be worshiped. In Moses farewell speech he gave them the option, to choose to obey God and they would be prosperous, victorious and blessed or to choose to disobey God and they would be cursed and defeated by their enemies who would take them as captives. God had been with the Israelites right from the time of Exodus in Egypt and through the desert for forty years wandering to the Promised Land. South Sudan must remember the long war it fought with the North to gain independence. This independence did not happen because of our might but because of God being on our side. South Sudan shouldn't forget that, as Israelites did when then entered the Promised Land when they worshipped Baal and Ashera.

9. Why do you think that Jesus talked about the destruction of Jerusalem like this?

There are several reasons to why Jesus talked about the destruction of Jerusalem like this. Jerusalem was filled with hypocrisy (11:37-54), had oppressed the poor (18:7; 20:47), had rejected the Messiah (13:33-34; 20:13-18), had missed the day of visitation (19:44), had rejected the gospel (Acts 13:46-48; 18:5-6; 28:25-28) and would slay God's Son (Lk 9:22; 18:31-33; 19:47; 20:14-19; 22:1-2, 52; 23:1-25; Stein 1992:521). As God fearing people, there should be no hypocrisy, oppression of the poor or rejection of God's word.

Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

“Jesus once famously said “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s but give to God what is God’s.

This weeks readings remind us that conflict is sometimes seen as punishment for wrong doing. They also point us in the right direction by telling us the simple truth that love is the essence of how life should be lived. But how to apply love and let it shape life without becoming weak and how make love a policy of government?

South Sudan is a community with different levels of authority and power with the resources available always needing to be shared in one way or another. So to starve itself rather than fight was a brave decision for a country to make in the face of a national challenge. To reduce government was a brave move that could easily have backfired. The slippery truth is that in South Sudan and elsewhere in the world precious resources such as oil can be shared peacefully and to the benefit of all. Countries don't need to fight like children. Some might call this common sense, but in practice it starts with forgiveness and requires love as a credible policy. It's the mark of real peace.

Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

“God our heavenly Father, we are people who don’t comprehend how your plan on each of us is so important and how everyone is important in your own sight. Help us to forgive each other and be ready to reconcile to one another when we wrong others. Teach us to live in humility and simplicity rather than boasting and being proud of our achievements or deeds. See us through dear Lord so that we would be able to live the way God wants us to live and not the way we want as persons. We have been wounded physically, mentally, socially, psychologically and spiritually but with your help God we would recover and get healed.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen”

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

For the Week Ahead

Before arranging to meet again for next week talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

“In the coming week think about the way that your country behaves. How is the word of God seen in the way it is governed? where do you fit in to the way policy is shaped for government? Are you giving to God and Caesar? Or just to Caesar? Pray about that this week.”

Arrange to meet next week and finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

Lent Course Week 6

Living Peace

By Rev Peter Angui Akook



Please read the Gospel accounts below.

John Chapter 14 Verse 27 - 31

27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage. **28** You heard me say to you, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I am. **29** I have told you now before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. **30** I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me, **31** but I am doing just what the Father commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. "

Luke Chapter 6 Verse 32 - 38

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33** And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. **34** And if you lend to those from whom you hope to be repaid, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, so that they may be repaid in full. **35** But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to ungrateful and evil people. **36** Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. **37** "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven. **38** Give, and it will be given to you: A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you use will be the measure you receive."

John Chapter 16 Verse 33

"I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage I have conquered the world."

Setting the Scene

People who love to be at peace with everyone in South Sudan are often labelled as either “cowards” or “fools”. For it is believed that a strong minded people could never be insulted and be unable to refute such insults or allegations. It is this brutally simple culture that allows cycles of revenge acts that can continue without halt. Whether it is a revenge of insults, killing or mere fighting, it seems a strong people must have revenge to keep respect. Many people try to pay back something the way it was given at first without any thought for dialogue, thinking of it as justice. When the victim is seen to be finding out how the incident took place, then the rest who seem to be taking sides would never themselves tolerate such incidences. They would react prior to provocation and violence would come as a result.

Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

- 1. What does peace mean for you**
- 2. What is the peace that Jesus wanted to leave with us?**
- 3. What was the thing that motivated Jesus to do all that he did?**
- 4. In the week before Jesus was crucified he could have left at any time and remained safe but he did not. Why do you think he faced death willingly?**
- 5. How does behaviour such as forgiving, not judging and loving enemies help to build peace?**
- 6. What would happen to society if everyone behaved in this way?**
- 7. How can society begin to change so that peace is normal?**
- 8. Does this involve any kind of risk or sacrifice? Is it worth a risk?**

9. Jesus never said that things would be easy, what do you think he meant by having peace in him?

10. What do you think Jesus meant when he said he had conquered the world? Does that have implications for us and for peace?

Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

The odd thing is that we all know what peace is, we know what it means to us and that living in peace would be a good thing, but time and again instead of peace and concord we have hatred and fighting. It seems to be something about us, we are the cause, when we could turn the other cheek how many do? At the slightest chance we fight.

But we can live in peace, Jesus lived and died to demonstrate how and to provide the one thing really needed to sustain peace. That thing is forgiveness. By his sacrificial death on the cross and resurrection three days later our own sins are forgiven. How? By the power and love of Almighty God, by the love of Jesus who trusted in God as a child trusts their Father. We have a duty then if God loves us to try and forgive others as God forgives us.

Forgiveness is a powerful tool that allows healing and makes peace. Not just a lack of fighting, but a real living peace. Living as Jesus showed and as God wants, in accord with the spirit brings all the benefits of peace and makes life a joy.

Change one life - your own, and you will soon find that you will change others too. In South Sudan and in many other places too change is needed, you have the power within you to bring this change if you want to. It's called peace – peace be with you.

Pray together:

Father, because of our sinfulness, we have become your enemies. Father, we turn away from all our disobedience to your word and commands.

We open our hearts and minds and ask your son Jesus to come and make us into a new person.

Come in Jesus.

Thank you God, for the gift of eternal life.

Amen.

For the Week Ahead

“Make a choice, choose peace. Become peace, live for peace, teach others peace every day that you live. In all that you do, no matter how great or small show the world peace in your actions. Because if you will not then who will? Think about this in the next week and then forever.”

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

Lent Course Week 6 Leaders Notes

Living Peace

By Rev Peter Angui Akook



Prepare ahead ensure that you are ready for the session well ahead of people arriving. Once people have gathered, greeted one another and pray for each other. Then share the Gospel accounts below.

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27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage. **28** You heard me say to you, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I am. **29** I have told you now before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. **30** I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me, **31** but I am doing just what the Father commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. "

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Try to answer the following questions and discuss your answers:

1. What does peace mean for you

According to Stephen Gray’s definition;

- Peace is living together with mutual respect, understanding and justice. If we have those first, then we can have peace.
- Peace is wholeness, being inclusive, prosperity and justice guarantees lasting peace.
- Peace means living together in brotherhood, harmony, and equal opportunity. We have to live with each other as a family but we have to give ethnics their sovereignty.
- Peace is stability and security and an opportunity for our country to develop by any means.
- Peace is the most important need of human beings. Peace depends on the needs of the constituency. Peace for government is rule of law.
- Peace is an end to our history of fighting, territorial integrity, protection of our sovereignty, and inclusion of all of our people in one country.
- Peace is freedom.
- Peace means living equally together with justice in terms of politics, business, and human rights.

- “Justice guarantees lasting peace”. Justice is not revenge. Peace also means agreeing about the border demarcation of our territory.
- Peace is the ultimate need for our country because without peace there is no justice;
- without justice there can be no democracy. Justice means equality for all of the people. Our country is ethnically diverse. They all should have equality.
- Peace means all human beings must have equal and full human rights.

2. What is the peace that Jesus wanted to leave with us?

- Peace that is a fruit of the spirit . . .
- Peace that is a twin sister of love, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Peace that is capable of making us love our enemies, bless those who curse us and persecute us (Matthew 5:44), and those who make us destitute, abandon us and make us lose power and prestige.
- Peace that is not neutral, neither generic, but peace that is born when we decide to forgive those who are our debtors, not because we want to be nice or merciful, but because someone (our King, the King of our lives) has already cancelled our debt and let us go.
- Peace that demands prophetic courage, even when it may cost us to lose our life.
- Peace that illuminates the way for us in the wilderness, and that leads us to be obedient even when we may not be sure where we are going, but trusting and hoping to find, and "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God," (Hebrews 11:10)
- Peace that is a scandal, foolishness to those who are perishing. It is that peace, the one that Jesus is calling us to pursue as Christians and as part of the body of Christ.
- Peace that God’s children await for, hunger for and thirst for everywhere.
- Peace that, beginning within the life and the spirituality of the Church, we urgently need to pursue especially because, even though our terrible debt has been cancelled, we have not yet learned to forgive the debt of our brothers and our sisters, the debt of our neighbours, the debt of our church colleagues, or even the debt of the members of our family.

3. What was the thing that motivated Jesus to do all that he did?

Peace of mind and heart motivated Jesus to perform what is far beyond our acceptance.

Jesus forgave all that we got wrong. He forgave us all our sins and our debts. He was mocked, ignored, insulted, tortured, spat on him and crucified on the cross. But yet he prayed on the cross a prayer of forgiveness to his Father. Jesus prayed that “Father forgive them for they don’t what they are doing”!

Furthermore, mercy and compassion also motivated Jesus to do all that he did to accomplish the work of redemption in order to set human beings free from the oppression of Satan.

Jesus put back the ear of the servant that was cut out by Peter so that peace is maintained.

4. In the week before Jesus was crucified he could have left at any time and remained safe but he did not. Why do you think he faced death willingly?

Jesus was a gift from God who was given as a “sacrificial lamb”. The very fact why Jesus refused to go to safety was the fact that he was the “fulfilment” that qualifies him to be called a “Saviour” and a “Redeemer”. Jesus accepted crucifixion willingly to bring peace to human beings on earth. His crucifixion was working as a sign of peace. Jesus death could be labelled as “sacrificial love” towards humanity. Jesus faced death willingly so that our lost relationship with God, neighbours and other creatures is restored. The best relationship human beings ever had before with God, creatures and other fellows in the Garden of Eden were cut when man fell to sin. But God’s love plan for human re-instatement is to send Jesus as a human to bring this saving act to humanity.

5. How does behaviour such as forgiving, not judging and loving enemies help to build peace?

There are some good reasons why forgiving others and loving enemies is very crucial to build peace.

- A person who forgives his or her wrong doer would never be overcome with evil.
- A person who loves his or her enemies helps him or her enemy lose.
- A person is tasked to become a son of the Father, so lead by example.
- Because forgiving, not judging and loving enemies has been exercised by Jesus himself. Therefore, the behaviour of forgiving, not judging and loving enemies paves the way to a peaceful atmosphere with one another in society and in any community.
- The behaviour of forgiving, not judging and loving enemies helps one to be free from any evil thought against each other.

6. What would happen to society if everyone behaved in this way?

If people behave in the way of forgiving, not judging and loving enemies there would be better common understanding among people. And the firmness of these people will be so strong regardless of their race, tribe & gender. People who love each other often live a progressive way of living. People who respect one another always have common goals and objectives related to peace activities in society.

7. How can society begin to change so that peace is normal?

Society can begin to change by defining our identity in Jesus Christ as all Christ's followers. Because when we see that we are all Christians we then realize that we are one people. The grouping of people in tribes should not be favoured but be resisted. Peace will be normal when people learn to forgive, not judging and loving enemies in every society. Our people need to accept changes that have no harm in their daily living.

8. Does this involve any kind of risk or sacrifice? Is it worth a risk?

In traditional thinking there are complicated steps that are supposed to be followed such as performing rituals for cleansing people who have sinned. People are asked or required to bring chicken, goats, sheep or cattle to be slaughtered so that the person is cleansed and forgiven by all people. But for us as Christians we are only asked to offer prayers for forgiveness and reconciliation so that people can embark on their normal way of life in peace and harmony. In Jesus peace is embodied by everyone without a risk.

9. Jesus never said that things would be easy, what do you think he meant by having peace in him?

Jesus said "not all those who called me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but those who do the will of my Father" To have peace in Jesus means someone is required to have total repentance of heart and remain focused on Jesus' footsteps. Jesus himself who came from heaven as God in human flesh has undergone so many temptations. Jesus was tempted for forty days and forty nights which most human beings could not manage to survive this horrible situation for so long. Those who would have peace in Jesus are those who withstand temptations as Jesus did even to the point of death for his name sake. Precisely, doing the "will" of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is the right thing that can give peace in the whole world.

10. What do you think Jesus meant when he said he had conquered the world? Does that have implications for us and for peace?

I have conquered the world. Jesus leaves his disciples with these words as he prepares them for what is coming. He is forewarning them not only of Jesus' own death, but also of the persecution the disciples themselves will face after Jesus' returns to the Father.

What does this mean that Jesus has conquered the world? I think it means that Jesus' spiritual work, his battle with the evil of the world, or the "ruler of the world" has been won. Jesus has faced every test, and in that realm of the spirit where values are created that rust can't diminish and moths can't eat, he has conquered the world. He has met every test with victory. He has lived his life as the Father has asked him to, despite every human temptation to succumb to the message of that "ruler of the world." He has kept his faith and lived his life in order to conquer. By doing so, he has given us the joy of understanding that we too, can therefore follow. The "ruler of the world" does not have power over us human beings in the same way as before this time; Jesus' victory is also mankind's victory. We have his Spirit of truth with us to help us also to follow. Jesus said to his disciples that very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts you will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete. The implication on us and for peace is joy in him.

Summing Up

Read the passage below to the group and then ask for a time of silence to prepare for prayer.

The odd thing is that we all know what peace is, we know what it means to us and that living in peace would be a good thing, but time and again instead of peace and concord we have hatred and fighting. It seems to be something about us, we are the cause, when we could turn the other cheek how many do? At the slightest chance we fight.

But we can live in peace, Jesus lived and died to demonstrate how and to provide the one thing really needed to sustain peace. That thing is forgiveness. By his sacrificial death on the cross and resurrection three days later our own sins are forgiven. How? By the power and love of

Almighty God, by the love of Jesus who trusted in God as a child trusts their Father. We have a duty then if God loves us to try and forgive others as God forgives us.

Forgiveness is a powerful tool that allows healing and makes peace. Not just a lack of fighting, but a real living peace. Living as Jesus showed and as God wants, in accord with the spirit brings all the benefits of peace and makes life a joy.

Change one life - your own, and you will soon find that you will change others too. In South Sudan and in many other places too change is needed, you have the power within you to bring this change if you want to. It's called peace – peace be with you.

Pray together:

Encourage everyone to say this prayer. If it is not practical to have enough sheets to share out teach the prayer by repeating it.

Father, because of our sinfulness, we have become your enemies. Father, we turn away from all our disobedience to your word and commands.

We open our hearts and minds and ask your son Jesus to come and make us into a new person.

Come in Jesus.

Thank you God, for the gift of eternal life.

Amen.

If the need is felt allow others to share prayers on this theme in a time of free prayer.

For the Week Ahead

Talk about how people feel they may be able to see the world differently and how this may affect the way they want to live.

“Make a choice, choose peace. Become peace, live for peace, teach others peace every day that you live. In all that you do, no matter how great or small show the world peace in your actions. Because if you will not then who will? Think about this in the next week and then forever.”

Finish saying the Grace together. In so far as is practical encourage people to say the grace holding hands and sharing a smile with each member of the group to encourage a positive feel of inclusiveness.

**“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.”**

When all the people have left make a note of anything that came up in the group session that may be useful in the life of your Church group or community.

Spend a short time in prayer to give thanks to God and pray for the people that have attended.

Connect With Wau Diocese

It has been our pleasure to provide this Lent Study Course. We have done this for free because we have been able to and also we really want to share the Good News of Jesus with as many people as possible. We hope that it has helped you to grow in faith and knowledge.

As an Anglican diocese in South Sudan we have many practical needs that require help. So we would very much like you to consider making a donation to Wau Diocese or partnering with us in our work. Practical help can be just as valuable as money.

Please contact us to receive our quarterly newsletter, called Renewal, we would very much like to share our news with you. Lots of useful information and contact details can be seen on our diocese website:

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