

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Swords into plowshares

- Pastor Hank French

*They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore;
but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken (Micah 4:3-4).*

I will confess to being a realistic idealist. That may seem contradictory, but I don't think it is. Life without ideals is small and ultimately self-centered and meaningless. Life reaching after ideals is large and ultimately other-centered and full of profound meaning.

But it would be Pollyannaish, unrealistically optimistic, to pursue ideals without a serious, realistic appraisal of the context, of the way the world is. And the way the world is, is not the way the prophet Micah envisioned it.

Swords have not been beaten into plowshares, and they won't be any time soon; spears have not been turned into pruning hooks; and nations still lift up swords against other nations. We do not all have our own vines and fig trees to sit under; we do not all have abundance and safety, and there are many whose intent is to make the rest of us afraid.

But the ideals that Micah presents to us are well worth holding and struggling to realize—even if they seem far beyond our reach. I don't expect to see Micah's vision of peace and justice realized in my time. But I think we can—and are—moving in that direction. And God's people—you and I—must continue to lead the way, to hold these ideals, and to work in the real world for change, no matter how incremental it might be.

As has been said before, there are some people who look at the world the way it is and wonder why; there are others who look at the world the way it should be and wonder why not, and then they roll up their sleeves and get to work. Realistic idealists, following Jesus in the way of justice and peace.

People of Christian faith who have seen Micah's vision of the world the way it should be are women and men who say why not and get to work. They are women and men who are the light of the world because they follow the Light of the World.

Prayer: Lord, "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Amen.