

I wish we had much more time today to sit around tables and calmly discuss all sorts of things, things that I wish we could discuss, things that we need to discuss. This is still Lent, and this is Holy Week, in which we have more serious business Thursday and Friday evenings. But think about this: Did you see the little ones walking today with their palm branches? Have you seen our 6 Confirmands? These kids, and I will always see them as kids whether they are 3 years old or 15, these kids have grown up in an interesting period that most of us have not seen: they have grown up in a world of constant war, since the day they were born. In the past, the world would be at war for a time, and then it would stop. Our children have lived during continuous war, yes long-distance war, that often seems to have no effect on our lives here. But it's still war. Long ago, Jesus made his way to Jerusalem, where he knew he would be killed. And after he started making his way into Jerusalem riding a donkey, but before he was actually in the city, he cried, and he said ***“If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But they are hidden from your eyes.”***

Let me refer one last time to the book about our addictions in today's America. The writer suggests that we seem addicted to so many things. But one thing on her list is that we also seem to be addicted to war. If we could just look at it calmly, it would seem to be a very expensive and dangerous thing to have as an addiction, right? It is very expensive to have all those machines and weapons, and to buy all that gasoline to run things. Congress just voted to spend \$650 billion for the military for the

next year, which is exactly half of the total budget for the period. This \$650 billion is the largest amount anyone in the world has ever intended to spend in one year, ever in history. Amazingly, we spend all this money, which we borrow from China, more money than the next 6 countries in the world spend on their military combined. We will spend all this money, and yet we cannot take care of homeless veterans who beg for money in our cities, and we still lose 22 of them each day to suicide. Did we not hear the words of Jesus, who we claim is Lord? ***“If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But they are hidden from your eyes.”*** What if Jesus was trying to say these things to us today? Would anyone listen? Or would we just tell him to stay out of it, that that is not his department?

Others have had this kind of problem in the past. We know from the Bible of ancient empires. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Media, Greece, Ptolemaic and Selucid, and finally the Romans. The Romans wanted to bring law and order to the world. They believed that they were the light of the world. But, they were brutal killers. They killed Jesus. In fact our lesson for today explains how that happened. The High Priest, who at that time was a political appointment of the Roman Empire, he said to his group who was concerned about the rising popularity of Jesus, and his message of God’s Kingdom that was coming, the High Priest said “Hey, we know what needs to happen here. It is better for one man to die, to calm this down, than for the Romans armies to come and kill us all!” Well, they did kill Jesus.

Our own Apostles Creed tells us that. Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. As it turns out, they do kill Jesus with his message of God's Kingdom which will end the Empires. But then within the next 100 years, the same Romans will kill more than 1.5 million Jewish people in Israel.

Jesus was killed because of military and political concerns stemming from the power of the Roman Empire. We should be horrified by what they did to Jesus, and also for the other 1.5 million people. But moving to our lives today, I fear that this war thing, with all the violence, is something that maybe we are getting used to. **Do we or do we not believe that violence or the threat of violence is the only solution in the world?** When I think about \$650 BILLION that will go for war and war preparation this year, and how much other good could have been done with even 10% of that money. I wish they could take 1% of that and set up care for the broken veterans, who have seen too much violence, violence that will not let them sleep at night, or return to a normal life. We need to repeat Lincoln's words that conclude the 2nd Inaugural Address. **"... let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan..."** And again I cannot help but think of the words of Jesus, *"If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But they are hidden from your eyes."*

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, may we one day recognize the things that make for peace. AMEN.