

## The Power and Promise of Peace

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Among the more sobering insights of the Biblical tradition is the frequent reminder that human survival is by no means a foregone conclusion. There are, in short, no divine guarantees. Ancient Israel's (and our Western) hubris in presuming that God "is always on our side" must always be balanced in the Biblical texts with the warning of the Prophets – a warning perhaps most startlingly summarized by the 8th Century prophet Hosea. As a sign to the people, Hosea chose names for his children that were to be taken as messages and warnings to the people. His third and final child, his son, thus bore the name "Lo-Ammi" – lit. "Not my people", which Hosea interpreted to be God's threat to reverse the covenant agreement established with Israel and all humanity at Sinai with Moses. According to Exodus 6:7, "You shall be my people, and I shall be your God".

What is especially noteworthy, however, is the fact that God's threat to humanity is occasionally accompanied by the accusation that human beings have become too violent. It was the violence of the people that brought on the flood and God's re-creation starting with Noah, the new Adam. It was the "violence of their hands" that brought God's threats through Jonah to the people of Nineveh.

In the history of the human enterprise – or perhaps human "experiment" better captures the truly tentative nature of this enterprise – we have never faced, with such ultimate finality, the threats of the ancient Prophets as we do in this time. But here is the final irony – we no longer need an angry deity to accomplish our end. We ourselves have become darkly brilliant disciples of apocalyptic destruction. It only deepens the irony that our destructive intentions are now most often dressed up in the language of faith –

a parade example of what Jesus called "whitewashed tombs" – that is – our brightly painted claims attempting to hide the reality of death within.

But the voices of light and life continue as heralds of the future – calling on us to realize the promise of our potential, and reminding us of the power of every step that we manage to take that moves away from the human failures that threaten us so deeply. We already know our own voices – they call us to protect rather than share, to worry about ourselves rather than embrace others, to pretend that the human family is not bound together in ways that far exceed our ability to convince ourselves of the importance of our differences. In the midst of our chorus of darkness, however, there are the too rare voices that hold the promise to lift our eyes, our minds and hearts upwards – and as one of these inspired soloists once said, "...as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18) thus adding his voice to the song begun with instructions to "Seek Peace, and Pursue It!" (Ps. 34:14;

cf. 1 Peter 3:11).

What is the promise of peace? Surely it is the promise that we humans can not only feed every mouth, but feed every soul as well. Surely our potential is that we can enrich God's gift of Earth for all species, and enhance the time

that each of us has been given with the possibility to reach our full calling as human beings – as creators, as artisans, as inventors and as travelers, as builders and philosophers. Peace is only the necessary first step to a humanity ready and able to live here, and explore the cosmos with the promise of what living with each other can actually accomplish. This is to fulfill our

calling to be choirs of light in the universe.