

## Being peacemakers (w/c 11 November 2018)

*"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."* James 3:17–18

In talking of peace, this is not simply our modern view of the lack of war or hostility, or even just a sense of calm, but rather the richness of the Jewish concept of *shalom* – peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare and tranquillity: knowing the fullness of God's goodness. To be a peacemaker is therefore to work and pray for someone or something to be as God wants them/it to be.

### Read 2 Corinthians 5:11–end

The essential role of an ambassador is to represent their own state while living in another. They are authorised to speak on behalf of their own country. As citizens of a heavenly kingdom (see passages such as Colossians 1:13 or 1 Peter 2:9–12) how should our calling to represent that state be reflected in our day to day lives?

Charities and churches can often be described as *"filling the gap"* in the provision of social care and other services in this country. While this is clearly vital, how much should churches and individual Christians, in their role as peacemakers, also publically question how and why such gaps have been allowed to develop?

Paul says that we are to be the *"righteousness of God"*. How does that make you feel? What do Old Testament illustrations such as Psalm 9:7–9, Psalm 33:4–5 and Jeremiah 9:23–24 add to your understanding?

### Read Matthew 5:1–12

Verse 9 here reminds us of Jeremiah 29:4–14 (especially verse 7) – what would it mean for Taunton to know the sort of peace – *shalom* – being described there? How far can we work with those of no or other belief in achieving that? Taking it further and thinking, for example, of the recent *Planet Repair Workshop*, how should we extend our concern for the community to work and campaign for the care and restoration of the wider creation?

The Old Testament contains many calls to protect the poor and condemnations for those who do not: see for example, Jeremiah 22:16, Isaiah 10:1–2, and Psalm 12:5. As you look around Taunton (or even Britain) today, how best can the church, individually and collectively, live out that calling?

In our recent parish profile we said: *"We serve others beyond the church because that is what Jesus did and called his followers to do."* How do we balance this with the need to share the peace that can only come through faith as, for example, Paul describes in Romans 5:1?

*"The poverty of the poor is not a call to generous relief action, but a demand that we go and build a different social order."* (Gustavo Gutiérrez)