

The Privilege of Being a Veteran Is a Calling to Be a Peacemaker! **Micah 4:1-5**

A Good Culture Shock!

Today, we remember and honor all veterans and military personnel who have served and are serving this nation. We express our gratitude to them because they have courageously served this nation in times of need. We should respect those who step forward and do their duty to defend the freedoms and peace that we enjoy. So again, thank you to all veterans and active members of the military for your service.

As an immigrant, I have often experienced culture shock. Some are good and some are bad. One of the most strange but wonderful culture shocks I've experienced in the United States was observing how people treat soldiers. I once went to Atlanta airport to pick up Juhee. While I was waiting, soldiers came out off of a plane to loud applause of the people around. I was very surprised because in Korea nobody expresses their gratitude toward soldiers. In Korea, nobody really pays attention or cares about soldiers because military service is mandatory. Also, those who serve in the military do not really have a sense of pride. Of course, they are proud of completing their military service, but their sense of pride is less about serving their country, but rather it's more like "whew, I have just finished one of the most difficult tasks on my "have-to list in life." What I have learned from the United States is that my two years in the military was not a waste of time but meaningful and valuable work for my country.

Paradox of the Military

As I prepared this sermon, I had to think deeply of the nature of the military and have realized some ironic truths. As I said, I am also a veteran of the Korean army and served in the army for 2 year and 2 months. Believe or not, I was in a special force unit. The primary object of my company was to infiltrate North Korea and preemptively destroy long range artillery if war was about to break out. So, one of my regular military trainings included overcoming various obstacles such as minefields, barbed wire and other traps that could be encountered along the Military Demarcation Line between North and South Korea. Near my army base, there was a training ground in which these various obstacles in the DMZ were replicated. We did the same training over and over again. Do you think that I had an opportunity to use all those skills while I was in the army? Of course, the answer is 'no' and I am grateful for that. Was my training meaningless? No. A Roman general once said, "If You Want Peace, Prepare for War." The military prepare for war, not for war itself but to keep peace. While soldiers are trained for war, they are trained for the sake of peace. Young soldiers with short tempers may want to go to war but those who have experienced war would say differently. I know some of our church members are war-time veterans and I believe you know the meaning of Dwight D. Eisenhower words, "There is no glory in battle worth the blood it costs." The best outcome of all soldiers' toils is the time of peace, in which no soldier needs to use what they have trained for. Even the ultimate goal of a just war is to re-establish peace. Peace is the goal.

Veteran's day is November 11 because World War 1 was officially over at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918. World War 1 was called "The War to End All Wars", so many people scarified their lives to end the War and to establish peace. Unfortunately, it didn't end all wars and other small and large wars followed and armed conflicts continue even today. As we take the time to appreciate and honor veterans, we also need to remember that wars can never end wars and violence can never end violence. We should honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in

war and those who serve this nation, but we should never romanticize war itself. Wars never end war and violence never ends violence.

Dream of God's Peace

We are Christians. To be Christians means to live in accordance with God's rule, the rule of love, the rule of forgiveness, the rule of reconciliation and the rule of shalom. To be Christians means to dream God's dream for us. Micah beautifully describes what God dreams for us. Micah prophesized that God will be the Lord of all nations and "shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away." What will happen?

"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 any more; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid."(3-4) This is the most powerful image of God's shalom. We may have different opinions to whether this dream can be realized on earth. Some may think it's an unrealistic dream and impossible to achieve. Some may believe it's possible because God dreams it and we work for this vision. But think of what would happen if Micah's vision was even partially fulfilled today?

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, world military spending reached almost 2 trillion dollars last year. They estimated that just "10 percent of world military spending could cover the costs of global goals aiming to end poverty and hunger in 15 years."¹ We don't have to beat all guns and tanks into farm tractors and combine harvesters. Just 10% is enough to significantly improve human conditions in the world. Do you think that every nation could work together to end the arms race and reduce military spending for the common good? Maybe... maybe not. But without dreams, nothing ever changes. Some say, "dreams are the seeds of change. Nothing ever grows without a seed, and nothing ever changes without a dream."² It takes visionaries. I believe everyone has seen airplanes flying in the air. If the Wright brothers and visionaries like them had not dreamed of flying, we would not have airplanes. If we don't dream the possibility of a peaceable world, we will never get there. In fact, we, Christians, can dream this impossible dream of a peaceable world because God has implanted this vision in us and "In God we trust," we can continue to work for a peaceable and better world.

Peacemaker: The Privilege of Being Veterans

If you are veterans, you are privileged. You are privileged because you have proudly served this nation and kept peace and freedom for others. You are privileged because you have seen the horror of wars and the true value of people. Let me share a Korean war veteran's interview. [ppt] What do you think of his interview? What touched my heart was "if you had a privilege of being scared to death in a war..., you have a privilege and maybe the duty to oppose war during your life-time because you've seen it." His testimony for peace is powerful because it comes out of his personal experience of the brutality of war. I believe the privilege of being veterans is the same. As you served the nation, you worked hard to keep peace and freedom. You have been peacekeepers. But, now, you are called to be peacemakers who dream of the world in which no nation lifts up arms against another nor do they learn war any more.

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-military-goals/just-10-percent-of-world-military-spending-could-knock-off-poverty-think-tank-idUSKCN0X12EQ>

² Debby Boone, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/debby_boone_195240

If you are not veterans, that's o.k. We still share the same privilege and duty to be peacemakers. The privilege of God's children is that we can dream a world, a better world or what we call the kin-dom of God and pursue that dream without fear because with God, all things are possible. As we dream and continue to work for it with faith in God, the world will shine again in grace and love. Dreaming of this new world is our privilege and duty. This peaceable world is what soldiers have died for.

I believe that the best way to honor our veterans and soldiers is to make a peaceable world. Let us remember and give thanks to veterans for their services. At the same time, let us dream of and pray for the peace of the world and work together for it. Be peacemakers and God will lead our way. Amen.