

**Blessed Are the Peacemakers!**  
**Micah 4:1-5 / Matthew 5:9**

Today, we remember and honor all veterans and military personnel who have served and are currently serving this nation. We express our deepest gratitude to them because they have stepped forward in times of need and courageously served this nation. Because they did their duty, we can enjoy freedom and peace.

Every Sunday since the beginning of the Ukraine War, we have sung the hymn “Let There Be Peace on Earth”. This hymn is our sincere prayer for peace. People’s attention and the news media’s focus have shifted from the Ukraine war to other things like Halloween, midterm elections and Thanksgiving, but it’s our responsibility to remember and face this man-made tragedy and keep praying for all people who are affected by it. We’ve heard about many brave men and women who have voluntarily joined the army to defend their country. It’s their blood and toil that maintains the freedom and independence of the nation despite the invasion of Russia. What they are doing is exactly what veterans and military personnel have done for this nation. We cannot thank them enough for their sacrifice and service. So again, thank you to all veterans and active members of the military for your service.

Being a soldier is difficult, even the training is difficult. As I told you last year, believe or not, I was in a special forces unit when I served the Korean army. One training was to march 65 miles in 30 hours. You know I love hiking but marching with 70 pounds in a backpack for 30 hours without sleep is not fun. Many military trainings also involve some danger. One training was rappelling from a helicopter and from a high tower. Jumping into the air from a helicopter was fun but also scary because there was the possibility of failure for a variety of reasons. Danger is a consistent part of military training and mission. Many war veterans get Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD, a deep wound to the soul, after experiencing the horrors of war, many carry physical wounds and some pay the ultimate price of life itself. The cost of freedom is indeed great, but the real challenge of being a soldier is to keep the soul and conscience from falling into an endless cycle of vengeance and hatred.

Part of military training inevitably involves hate training. When I was in the military, soldiers regularly learned about the primary enemy of the state, which was North Korea. Benjamin Schneider, a Military history expert, wrote that “during the Second World War, the US Army was faced with the problem of turning average civilians into soldiers capable of destroying the German army. To ease their adjustment to their new duties... the Army Ground Forces adopted a training regimen designed to produce an ‘induced urge to hate the enemy. This training would make soldiers into enthusiastic killers by portraying the enemy as brutal and ruthless and warfare as a fundamentally lawless activity.” I believe that the methods of training soldiers have changed but we also hear stories of war crimes and how war itself can easily degrade one’s moral conscience and drag one into hatred and violence. We should honor those who have given the ultimate sacrifice in war and those who serve this nation, but we should never romanticize war itself. We must honor and appreciate veterans, but we also need to remember that violence can never end violence and hatred will never end hatred.

**Children of God**

In this world, many nations strengthen their military to keep the peace. They dream of building the strongest military as their peacekeeper, a deterrent to aggression. However, we are Christians who try 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. We are children of God who dream of God's peaceable kin-dom to be realized on earth and live for that dream. Micah beautifully describes what God dreams for us. Micah prophesied 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.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." The Peacemaker will be called children of God. We are children of God. That means we are fundamentally called to be peacemakers, not peacekeepers. While the peacekeeper maintains peace and minimizes the conflict among groups and nations, the peacemaker seeks reconciliation among groups and mends broken relationships. When the Ukraine War first broke out, people expressed their solidarity with Ukraine and supported them. We mourned for the victims of this unjust war. I did it too. But as time passed, I felt we had missed something. What have we missed? I know Russia invaded Ukraine and there is no justification for their unjust action. Who is dying in this war? Ukrainians and Russians. Did all Russian soldiers want the war? Apparently not! Some didn't even know where they were going until they arrived at the frontline. Can we pray for them too, while we pray for the Ukrainians? Instead of taking only one side, we, Christians are called to be peacemakers who oppose war and try to mend broken bridges between people and groups.

### **Peacemaker: The Privilege of Being Veterans**

If you are a veteran, 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. In an interview with the World Council of Churches, a Korean war veterans said, "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." There is no glory in war and veterans know the true value of peace in their hearts. As peacekeepers, you worked hard to keep peace and freedom. But, now, God calls you to be children of God, to be peacemakers who dream of a world in which no nation lifts up arms against another, nor do they study war any longer.

If you are not veterans, that's o.k. We also are called Children of God, which means that we share the same privilege and duty to be peacemakers. I believe peacemakers are desperately needed in our divided nation. We have heard hate-filled and divisive speeches before the midterm election. Even after the election, there is no real reconciliation in divided America. Say 'no' to any temptation to dehumanize and demonize others. Don't just believe what the leaders of your political party say. Our salvation comes from Jesus Christ, the King of Peace. Dream of the kin-dom of God to come and pursue that dream to be realized in this world. Do you think a peaceable world without war and conflict is possible? Do you think that the United States can be truly united for the common good beyond Red and Blue? 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."<sup>1</sup> If we don't dream the possibility of a peaceable world, we will never get there. In fact, we, Christians, can dream this impossible

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<sup>1</sup> Debby Boone, [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/debby\\_boone\\_195240](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/debby_boone_195240)

dream of a peaceable world because God has implanted this vision in us and because “In God we trust,” we can continue to work for a peaceable and better world. My friends, as children of God, be peacemakers and builders of God’s peaceable kin-dom on earth. Be peacemakers and God will lead our way. Amen.