



Garstang United
Reformed Church

Plants for Reflection: Peace Plough

Bible Passage: Micah 4:3 (NRSV*)

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks

This image occurs in a number of the books of the prophets in the Old Testament including Isaiah (2:4), and this passage from Micah. The verses in Isaiah and Micah are identical reading in full:

He [God] shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more

Both Micah and Isaiah date from the 8th Century BC. Micah came from a small village west of Hebron in the fertile plains which slope down to Mediterranean coast. Perhaps not surprisingly, his book is full of images drawn from the countryside where he grew up - sheep and shepherds, the arable harvest and various plants and trees. For both Isaiah and Micah, their writings also reflect the uncertain times in which they lived, with wars, rumours of war and other conflicts within the areas in which they lived.

Reflection

The components used to make the Peace Plough should remind us of the variety of things that can be used to cause injury and death. The Plough includes guns and ammunition, swords and spears, grenades, and knives. But the Plough is more than simply about weapons - the materials used also remind us of things that are used to keep people apart, for example the barbed wire and the slave chains.

There is a Hebrew word “Shalom” which we often simply translate as “peace.” However, the word invites us to an understanding of peace that is much more than the absence of war. More positively it is about our responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of all our fellow women and men. The absence of war is obviously part of its message, but it also asks us to look at the other ways in which people are denied peace in our world.

* New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, © 1989, 1995, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Take just one of the specific components on the Plough and think those who are affected by it in our own country. As examples put yourself in the shoes of someone affected by knife crime, or a person still chained by modern day slavery. Think about how hard it must be for them to find peace and what you could do to help.

Prayer

God of peace may your presence come into our world.
Help us to put down our tools of war and destruction.
Guns, Swords, Knives and Bombs.
Things made by people that bring death and injury to our fellow women and men.
Your peace calls us to bring an end to war and division in our country and community and across our world.

God of peace may your presence come into our world.
Teach us the ways that lead us to fairness and justice.
Teach us to reach out in love to those who are excluded, those searching for safety and wellbeing.
Make the offer of peace, our offer of hope of a better world and a better life.
A freedom from uncertainty and insecurity.
A belief in the power of love, compassion, and joy.

God of peace may your presence come into our world.

Amen.