



Rev. Simon Hansford

• September 21, 2021  
• One Comment

*Transcript of the Moderator, Rev. Simon Hansford's address at the International Day of Peace Service 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021.*

I acknowledge and pay my respects to the Gamilaraay people, the custodians of the land on which I stand today. I am aware that we stand on the country of many different First Nations people, and I offer my respects.

I acknowledge their deep spiritual connections to this land and I thank them for the care they have shown the lands and waters on this country over thousands of years.

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A political leader tosses a leaden phrase into the sea of white noise which our media has become, calling two others like him “Friends of Freedom”, and barely a ripple is seen, or a splash heard. Ninety billion dollars is spent in one sentence, while billions more are discounted in fewer words, with one commentator observing that it’s not that much in the scheme of things.

At that moment, small businesses, unemployed people and hungry families across our nation dream of the capacity to access such largesse, to gather the crumbs under the table of such excess.

A few faltering heartbeats since Afghanistan was left to the renewed depredations of the Taliban, following two decades of war, and the three nations with memories like goldfish have started trading nuclear weaponry, searching for a new conflict in which to invest.

Some of the bastard children of so many speeches and so much cliché are the words which begin to lose their shape and, eventually their meaning. Justice looks more and more like vengeance, mercy tastes like haggling, hope feels like wishful thinking, and what has peace become?

The prophets of our Hebrew Scriptures speak of peace in such a way that it is not the absence of violence but, rather, the creation of something essential for human life and

flourishing. God's *shalom* is not constrained to a lack of gunfire, or screaming, but about deep prosperity, where we can live safely, eat food we have grown and drink wine from the grapes in our vineyard.

These prophets know the world – our world. They know the wealthy and powerful who think only of themselves, the merchants with dodgy scales, those who turn the music up so they can't hear the cries of those in need, and the false prophets and public servants who whisper blandishments in the king's ear.

*The prophet Jeremiah reminds them, and us:*

*They have treated the wound of my people carelessly,  
saying, "Peace, peace,"  
when there is no peace. [Jer.6:14]*

How can we speak of peace and justice when a Tamil family has been imprisoned in our country for years, because they seek life, *shalom*? How can we speak of peace when even our wealthy nation uses dodgy scales to measure out care and vaccination to our citizens depending on where they live? Our media will gently airbrush Afghanistan's crisis from our sight, even while the grotesquely misnamed "precision bomb" destroyed a family of seven and not an ISIS terrorist.

Peace is not when we change from Four Corners to Gogglebox; it is when we act to build peace with our neighbour, when we reject the subtle temptation to despair, when we challenge our friend in that conversation when they blame another race, or culture, or faith for whatever problem has surfaced.

I have almost no time for those who would keep the peace at all costs, who close the windows and curtains so that the cries of the hungry don't disturb their evening meal.

I have all the time in the world for those who will expend everything to create peace:

speaking up,  
sitting beside,  
waiting with,  
listening to,  
building patiently,  
hopefully.

The One I worship calls me to faithful service. The One I follow blesses the broken, attends to the least, places a small child in the midst of us and proclaims her worth, welcomes the outcast and the stranger. The One who calls me, challenges me to bring the greeting of peace to each home I visit, to each table to which I am invited.

Creating peace with those I love is a task which gives me joy; creating peace with those I would oppose is my calling, our calling as human beings, as people of faith.

I seek to create peace out of the hope I hold, in the One I seek to follow. Wishing has no place here; but peace, founded on hope, shaped by justice and seasoned by mercy is a covenant for a world starving for life.

***Say No To Peace***<sup>[1]</sup>

*Say 'no' to peace if what they mean by peace*

*is the quiet misery of hunger, the frozen stillness of fear,*

*the silence of broken spirits, the unborn hopes of the oppressed.*

***Tell them that peace is the shouting of children at play,  
the babble of tongues set free, the thunder of dancing feet  
and a father's voice singing.***

*Say 'no' to peace if what they mean by peace*

*is a rampart of gleaming missiles, the arming of distant wars,*

*money at ease in its castle and grateful poor at the gate.*

***Tell them that peace is the hauling down of flags,  
the forging of guns into ploughs, the giving of fields to the landless,  
and hunger a fading dream.***

Peace be with you always.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Brian Wren, *Praising a Mystery* © Oxford University Press, 1986