**Thursday, May 28**

*“The wolf will live with the lamb…the leopard with the goat…the cow and the bear shall graze together…the lion will eat straw like the ox…a baby will play safely over the hole of the asp. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” Isa 11:6-9*

This vision of the peaceable kingdom tells us a lot about what God wants life on this earth to become. It has so much to say about how God want strength and power to be used. These days we’re surrounded with so many examples of people who use intimidation or violence to hurt or oppress others. This vision calls for us to reexamine what we do, and how we do it, to see if we’re aligned with God’s trajectory for life on this planet or not. In a nutshell, anything we do that deviates from the righteousness, harmony, and wellness described in Isaiah’s vision proves that it is not on God’s side of things.

Perhaps the most important part of Isaiah’s vision is how it points to what the church is called to be. Following God’s vision for the world will always be about meeting real needs among the poor, sick, and oppressed. It will always be about the health and wellness of the natural world we’ve been given. It will always help to promote genuine peace, in our neighborhoods and nations.

Most of us in our church know that the society around us is changed – maybe now more than ever in our lifetimes. We know that there are literally thousands of people around our church who are “spiritual but not religious,” but who long for a sense of community and want to make a difference for good. Maybe this time in our church’s history gives us the opportunity to pull our familiar pictures of Christ, the church, and our faith off the shelf and see them afresh. This can be a time to make sure the way we envision God and God’s will is clear. It can be a time to see whether the places where we put our time and energy belong in the same vision we hold of Jesus’ life and ministry.

The scriptures are given so often to help us look in the mirror, so that we can remind ourselves that before all else, we belong to God, and that God’s love is the law of life. It is that love which moves us to use our resources to build a better world, to overcome human strife, and to proclaim the message of the gospel, until, as Isaiah saw, “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

Prayer: Loving God, in spite of all that is happening in the world now, we cling to this promise that one day there will be no more pain, no more disease or destruction, and all will be at peace. Help us to pray for this restoration. But more, reform and transform our lives toward the obedience – the listening and following of your Spirit – that is our best and only freedom. Amen.