

... let there be peace on earth...

One summer evening in 1955, a group of 180 teenagers of all races and religions, locked arms, formed a circle and sang a song. Written by Jill Jackson Miller and her husband, Sy Miller, this song gained worldwide popularity because of its universal message of longing for personal and planetary peace.

In November Adam is being deployed to Afghanistan. I am so proud of him. Those of you who hold a service man or woman in your heart and prayers know that feeling of pride and respect. However I find myself wondering as I sing the words of that song every Sunday "let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me".

Where is this peace that we sing about and who dropped the ball regarding it?

I thought I did "begin this peace" with me. No toy guns were allowed in the house. Much to the chagrin of my children we didn't have "squirt guns" only squirt animals and as they grew from the squirt animal stage to the video game stage, they would be the first ones to roll their eyes as I would mention time and time again, if you are going to hunt down and destroy people in a video game, there should be a consequence to deal with afterwards. We chose to settle here in West Bridgewater, a small peaceful town, with its share of problems, but sheltered from a lot of the worries and activities that one would find in a larger city or area.

Yet here I am bewildered and confused and even a bit scared, trying to figure out how such an "unpeaceful" part of the world has encroached on my little corner.

Sometimes it's easy to find peace. But most of the time peace is hard, peace is constantly fought for, peace slips through our fingers so fast and it's hard to get it once again in our grasps

If there were only a magic wand one could wave, or even a time-out chair for the "bad people" to have to sit upon. Imagine sending a text

to the powers-that-be with a simple message such as... "This is your mother, stop fighting now or you will be sent to your room" Or maybe, "Stop teasing each other, use your indoor voices and share your toys" and let's not forget the always popular "Okay now shake hands and play nice".

Peace is possible. As the song states "the peace that is meant to be". For me this is the big-time peace. Not just the calming of our fears and worries peace or the realization that God is there for those stressed out moments of our everyday lives peace but the encompassing global peace.

Reading from Isaiah Chapter 2 verse 4

"and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore"

When I mentioned to my sister Helen that I was doing a message on this song and that one of the scripture readings I was doing was going to be Isaiah Chapter 2 verse 4, she offered to send me her "pin" of peace that she was given and the history that goes along with it.

The story goes that a church group collected enough money to purchase a fighter plane that was used during wartime. They took the entire plane apart and cut it into small pieces; they then shaped those pieces into swords and then beat the swords into plowshares. These small plowshares have been sold and the proceeds are being used for peace-related projects.

Like these small pins of which have spread throughout Helen's community and beyond, this song has taken flight across the globe. The simple thought of peace on earth by starting with one's own commitment continues to travel across the land uniting people everywhere who wish to be a note in a song of understanding and peace.

So why hasn't peace been achieved. We have to make the phrase ... "let us walk together in perfect harmony" not just be words we sing in a song each week, but be a creed for us to live by.

Isaiah Chapter 11 verses 6-7

"the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together and a little child will lead them. The cow shall feed with the bear; their young will lie down together and the lion will eat straw like the ox"

Even though this passage speaks of animals living peacefully together I believe it speaks of what God has planned for his people. For me it is saying that it was never God's purpose for us to wage war AGAINST each other, rather he created us to share His blessing of love and thus live in peace WITH each other.

I knit. When I am knitting I am thinking about the person whom the piece is going to. My newest project is a blanket for Adam and I know that when I pick up those knitting needles I will feel and be closer to him. With my knitting I am always on the lookout for fun or different ideas to make or yarns to work with. I recently came across a website for a company called "Peace Fleece". I decided to check it out.

The Peace Fleece Company is a small yarn shop, run by a husband and wife team of Peter and Marty Tracy, in Porter, Maine.

It was started in 1985 when Peter and Marty began to buy wool from Russia in hopes that through trade they could help diffuse the threat of Nuclear War. Since then Peter has journeyed throughout Eastern Europe, central Asia and the Middle East in search of farmers and shepherds who are willing to set aside historic enmities in exchange for opportunities leading to mutual understanding and economic interdependence.

Many of the people with whom Peace Fleece works overseas, are in the midst of political, social or economic crisis and some are even living in war zones

With colors such as Bagdad Blue or Purple Petunia, Peter and Marty take these fibers and along with their own wool from their sheep in Maine, they spin them together to make a yarn that now holds within it a link to another part of the country and hopefully a link to peace. A part of the proceeds from these various yarns go back to the villages and the people who helped to establish this possibility

I love this idea and I did purchase a kit and made a keychain. Like mini fiber sculptures, these braids are made from wrapped strands of Mid-East and Maine Island yarn and it is my way of showing the world that one person CAN make a difference.

.. in closing "with every step I take, let this be my solemn vow..."

I will continue to sing this song. I will be singing it louder and prouder than ever... I will be singing it for Adam and I will be singing it for the rest of the world. I also know that I will continue to strive to be that "one person" who can make this peace happen.

"let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me"... and let it begin with you and let you pass it on so that eventually there will be more of "us" and less of "them" and we may be able to look at each other one day and say....

Psst... I had peace and now the world has peace.

Amen