

My father was born in 1893. He was a young man when World War I started. He entered the army and, despite the fact that he had only a 6th grade education, he became an officer, a 1st Lieutenant, and fought in the battle of the Argonne Forest and at Chateau Thierry. I was told that he received the Croix de Guerre for bravery in battle. On his way back to the states his ship sank off the coast of North Carolina and he drifted in a life boat in the Atlantic for some 20 hours. I learned none of this from my father. My father never talked about his war experiences. When he returned home he got rid of his uniform, his officer's pistol, his Croix de Guerre, he divested himself of every reminder of the war. When I was a young boy fascinated with the glory of war I would climb onto my father's lap and ask him to tell me about the war. He would always quickly change the subject or say he couldn't remember anything.

I have also sat in the pastor's study on a number of occasions with men who were reliving the horrors of war, of WWII, of the Korean War, of the Viet Nameese war. I have seen grown men sob and wail aloud because they cannot get the memories out of their minds.

And I think of the words of G. Studdert-Kennedy, a world war I chaplain beloved by his men. He wrote,

There's a crowd of wooden crosses in the wounded
heart of France,
Where the cornfields used to glisten and the blood-
red poppies dance,
Can't you hear the crosses calling us to give
the Christ a chance...

Let us face the fact that so many have learned from experience, that war is always horrible. It is glorious and romantic only in movies and comic books. It means, as Karl Barth pointed out, "no more and no less than killing, with neither glory, dignity nor chivalry, with neither restraint nor consideration." Donald Macleod of the very conservative and small Free Church of Scotland reminds us that war is about slaughter, slimey trenches, drunkenness and fornication. It is about soldiers roasted alive in blazing tanks, sailors trapped in sunken submarines and airmen hurtling to their deaths in crippled aircraft. As we have seen from ^{The recent fighting in Lebanon,} ~~Israel's rape of Lebanon~~ war is about civilians buried and incinerated in bomb devastated cities. It destroys mankind's cultural treasures, justifies the suspension of his freedoms and the practice and refinement of all the means of torture. It calls for all that God has forbidden: deceit, treachery, theft, ruthlessness, terrorism and infidelity. Few of those who are involved

in war ever recover from its moral consequences.

Today the thought of nuclear war makes past wars seem like child's play. I have read that one Polaris submarine carrying 16 missiles with three warheads each, possesses more destructive power than all the munitions used in WWII put together including the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Between them Russia and America have 12,000 strategic nuclear warheads plus medium range missiles. Their total destructive force are said to be equal to one million Hiroshima bombs. It has been calculated that the world's nuclear arsenals contain the equivalent of 13 billion tons of high explosives, three tons for every man, woman, and child on earth. The thought of nuclear war is horrible beyond imagination.

In the shadow of all this does the Bible have nothing to say about the issue of peace-making? It is difficult for me to see how any preacher who believes in the infallibility of Scripture and who has been called by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, to preach the "whole counsel of God" can avoid addressing himself or herself to the threat of nuclear war. Furthermore, to me it seems Satanic and demonic to imply or to say, as is so often done, that anyone who speaks out for peace and a nuclear weapons

freeze must be a dupe of communism. I take my stand with the Psalmist who wrote, "My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war." The Bible is filled with principles which apply to the issue of war and peace-making and it is wrong and dishonest to spiritualise all these biblical principles as though the peace of which the Bible speaks is exclusively private, inward, and spiritual peace.

For example, in our Scripture lesson, the prophet Isaiah speaks of the folly of a nation looking to weapons for its security. Without a doubt there were those in Israel who were saying that Isaiah was an Assyrian or a Babylonian sympathiser. There were those who were saying that he should speak out ~~in public~~ only about spiritual things. But Biblical prophets and biblical preachers do not so easily divide the spiritual and the non-spiritual.

Last week I preached on Isaiah 45:22. "Look to me all the ends of the earth and be ye saved." In its context the salvation promised was not limited to spiritual salvation. It included salvation from injustice, war, and terror... if only the nations would look to God for their security. Israel was looking to Egypt as a model military power. Israel was looking for security in the latest weapons systems of the day. Israel was not looking to the Holy One.

to the Lord.

Nor is our nation looking to Christ on the cross as the means by which the world may be reconciled to one another. Our nation is looking primarily to missile systems, bombs, and sophisticated weaponry for salvation. God and Christian social morality is not naive or unrealistic. I don't think that Christian principles would require that a nation unilaterally disarm entirely. God has ordained governments to be as a defence for the people among other things. I believe that Scripture, reason, and tradition allow a nation to adequately defend itself.

But our nation increasingly is becoming aggressive and preparing for a first strike capability. Above and beyond that we are looking ultimately to our weapons to save us; *to liberal thought by spending more & more money on weapons* There is an explicit assumption that our nation can remain free only if we spend more and more money on the military and the development of still more sophisticated weapons. This view is understandable. Our nation is a secular and materialistic nation. Both capitalism and communism are thoroughly secular and materialistic. Our leaders, for the most part, do not let their religious convictions influence their political decisions. It is not hard to understand how secular men and women would look to missiles and weapons to save us and cry for more and more military

spending at the cost of the poor, the oppressed, and the old.

What is hard to understand is why Christians; evangelical, Bible believing, Born-again Christians are no different from our secular fellow citizens. Implicit is the demand for more and more military spending is the faith in guns rather than God. It appears that we fear Russia more than we fear God. At the very least we are relying as a nation, like ancient Israel, on our weapons for our defense. We are not looking to the Holy One of Israel.

If ancient Israel's history is anything to go by, however, then when genuine godliness holds sway in a nation, God's providence provides a nations main defense. But when godliness is forsaken and God's laws are trodden underfoot, God sends judgment, sometimes in the form of strong, aggressive and godless nations and no amount of nuclear weapons can protect us. It is ultimate foolishness and idolatry to think that our defense can be assured by bigger and bigger defense budgets apart from a humble repentance and a sincere covenant renewal of God's people with their Lord. Isaiah points the way that repentance on a national level takes when he writes, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice.

relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow... deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poor that are cast out to thy house... when thou seest the naked, cover him. (Isaiah 1:16f., 58:6, 7f.).

We believers need to be preaching the same message the ancient prophet Isaiah preached in the face of cruel, aggressive, and expansionist empires, to call our nation and its leaders back from their idols including reliance on military power to the true and living ^{God.} Woe to those who rely on Polaris submarines, who trust in the multitude of their missiles and in the great strength of their nuclear stockpiles but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord... return to him you have so greatly revolted against. Reject the idols of titanium and aluminum your sinful hands have made declares the Lord.

AMEN