

7th October 2024

Peace

**“Peace, peace will, peace will come,
and let it begin with me.”**

Tom Paxton, *Peace Will Come*

On the 7th of October 2023, a year ago today, Hamas and other nationalist militant groups launched coordinated armed incursions from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel, initiating the current and continuing Israel-Hamas war, and the devastation and loss of life we have seen in the past year. And we know that armed conflict has since spread throughout the Middle East. Enough has been said about this, and too many tears have been shed over it, for me to rehearse familiar arguments and go over well-trodden ground. But I am compelled on this day to state the obvious – that violence and war achieve nothing, other than the perpetuation of violence and war. When, oh when, will we realise this?

Even writing this, I am in tears again. It all seems so hopeless. Where do we begin to make changes that lead to peace? I pray for peace, of course. But what does that mean? I pray for those who seek peaceful solutions in places of conflict, but what does that change? Where am I with peace? I want God to bring peace. But then, I weep with Jeremiah: “‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.” I can do no other than to deal with what I can deal with, and that is to find, and nurture, peace for my own soul. This, today, is the only place I can begin

Black Elk, a Native American Chief, wrote this in *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk’s Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* in 1953.

The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes from within our souls, when we realise our relationship, our oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when we realise that at the centre of the universe dwells *Wakan-Tanka*, and that this centre is really everywhere, it is within each of us. This is the real peace, and the others are but reflections of this. The second peace is that which is made between two individuals, and the third is that which is made between two nations. But above all you should understand that there can never be peace between nations until there is first known that true peace which is within our souls.

“Peace, peace will, peace will come, and let it begin with me,” Tom Paxton sings. Today, in pain and through tears, that is all I have.

A prayer for today

Prayers, God? Let my tears speak for me, for I have no words. Amen