

Christmas Eve - 2023

~ The Prince of Peace ~

A story in three acts:

the peace child...

the Prince of Peace...

the promise / gift of peace...

~ ~ ~

- Once upon a time...

There was a land where the people fought against each other...

It was a land that was far away, but - it was not in a time long ago -
although... it might have been.

You may be familiar with this land, and this people. But the people you
know are not the people in this story. This is *their* story, (although...
it could be yours...)

But these people... in this time - they fought...

they fought over water....

and they fought over land...

They fought over misunderstandings... and they fought over things
that had happened long ago...

they fought.

They fought over silly things... things that you or I would easily forget, but not
these peoples - they didn't seem to know how to forget... how "not to fight..."

Until one day, their two kings met unexpectedly at a watering hole.

The king from the East was thirsty, for he had been out hunting, and the sun was high in the sky. But he had no cup, and did not want bend down to lap up the water (because - as everyone knows - when you turn your back to a possible threat, that is when “the threat” leaps out of the bushes...).

The king from the West had come with two buckets and a yoke, but he had no weapon, for his hands were full, and he was just making a quick trip to the watering hole - expecting there would be no trouble.

The king from the East was the first to spot the other, since he was alert to possible threats (and - he was in hiding - as is fitting for a hunter out in the savannah). The king from the West was not expecting any problems, and came easily to the watering hole.

As the king from the West dipped his first bucket into the water, a lion leapt out of the grass and would have had him - but for the instinctive actions of the king from the East - who leapt up and threw his spear, which struck true - bringing down the lion and saving the life of the king of the West - which, when the king of the East came to his senses - was not what he wanted to do. Because...

These were a people who fought... over everything...

The king from the West bent down on one knee, and - seeing that the king from the East had no cup - offered him some water.

The king from the East, being thirsty (and - having seen the king from the West draw the water from the watering hole himself) - gratefully accepted.

And as they drank together, they talked with one another. They talked of lions and thirst... they spoke of hunting and how to attach a spearhead to a shaft... they discussed portents in the sky and were surprised to discover that they had seen the same stars... they talked about their families - and came to the realization that they would both soon be fathers for the first time.

And as they stayed together, the king from the East offered one of his buckets to the king from the West. And the king from the West offered some of the meat from the lion to the king from the East. And they wondered...

They wondered if there might be some way let their people know that they didn't have to fight... that they could get along... that there could be peace. And they came up with a most remarkable idea.

They could not say who had the idea first, but they both knew it rang true.

And in three months' time, the two kings met again at the watering hole, and they brought their people with them. And the king from East gave into the hands of the king from the West his child. And the king from the West gave into the hands of the king from the East his child.

And they were each known as the "peace child." And as they grew to be princes, they brought peace to the land, and - peace to the people.

And the interesting thing is, that once the people learned peace, they forgot what they used to fight about...

This was once upon a time, but -

it was true... (1962 - New Guinea - among the Savi people)

~ ~ ~

- Once upon another time...

in a land far away, and in a time (as it happens) - long ago...

... there lived a King in a magnificent palace. There was nothing like it in all creation. From his windows, he could take in all the lands of his realm. When he held court, all were welcome to come and make their pleas.

But - as wondrous as it was, his subjects - the people who enjoyed the land he gave them... the people who were blessed with the justice and the mercy of his rule... these people did not understand what a gift they had been given.

They whined... they kvetched... they treated one another poorly... they didn't pick up their toys... and they swept the dirt under the rug (whenever they thought to clean up) and - called it good enough.

But more than that - just like those people in that other story... and just like those people you might be familiar with... they fought.

For some reason we'll never know, the king was committed to his people. Sure, they were an unpleasant lot, but he loved them all the same. They were *his* people, and he was loath to turn his back on them.

So he came to them again and again, in different ways and at different times, to try and make them see how he loved them... how they would be so much better off if they just let him be for them - their king.

He sent his servants to speak to them of his love... to remind them of all his blessings and his goodness. But the people beat these servants, and sent them back to the palace (when they bothered to send them anywhere at all).

This king disciplined his people, as a mother or father might discipline a child - in the hopes they would open their eyes to see what is right, and - what is wrong.

But the people took this as a sign that the king had rejected them, and swept more dirt under the rug, and strewed their toys into bigger and messier piles, and said to themselves - "that'll show him!"

But the king was faithful, and - the king was merciful, and - the king could never forget that these were his people... his children... so he sent his own son - to be for them the Prince of Peace. He could have sent his son as mighty warrior riding a swift steed with flaming sword... but he didn't

He could have sent him out of a burst of starlight in the night sky - so bright that all the world became as day - and all eyes could see a mighty figure in the sky, no matter where they were, and thus it would be clear to all who this was... but he didn't.

Instead - the king sent him to a family - a common man... an ordinary woman. The king's son - the Prince of Peace - was born as we all are. The king's son - the Prince of Peace - came into our world, and - lived in our world - as we do. He fell, and he got up. He hungered, and - he was fed. He grew, and - he spoke of the king's love... the king's righteousness... the king's mercies.

He came to bring peace, and just as happened with those other kings, and that land that was not all that far away - this king placed his child into our hands, but - asked for nothing in return. His only desire was that his people know peace.

Many of these people welcomed the child, and - found peace. But sadly, many others rejected him, and - beat him... and turned him over to be killed. And - while they thought they were done with him, he was not done with them.

For he came to bring a peace that could not be quashed. And he himself would see it through, even if we thought he was done.

This also was once upon a time, but -

it is true... (as told by Jesus... in the Gospels...)

~ ~ ~

- Once upon *our* time...

Here in our land, where we live, and - in lands far away, where we have never been, but where others live...

The people fight.

Oh... they don't all fight in the same way. Some are nasty, and care nothing for what they can not command. Others just whine and kvetch, and continue to sweep the dirt under the rug and leave their toys out...

and call it good enough.

You might be familiar with these people, and - with this land. For this is where and when we live...

And once upon *this* time - there was a little boy who thought he was king - because everyone bent to his every whim, and when they didn't - he threw a tantrum until they did...

He didn't put his toys away, and he lets other do the cleaning. When something is broken - it's someone else's fault. You might not read about this little boy on the front page of the newspaper, but he is likely how those who make the front pages... start out.

But before that could happen, this little boy had a Saturday sleep over at a friend's house. It was in early December, and this friend's family took him to church. And it was there that he heard about a baby who was called the Prince of Peace, which made no sense at all, but - he couldn't get it out of his head.

And he stayed after church to watch his friend in practice for a pageant. And he was asked to be a shepherd (because you can never have too many shepherds...). And apparently - the animals in this play did not get along (at least at first), so shepherds were needed... And - in this pageant - he heard a story he had never heard before.

He was startled by a bright light... he was afraid when he saw the angels... he was comforted by their words... he was excited to go and see what it was all about.

And then - when he knelt before the feed trough, that held the baby, that they called the Prince of Peace - something changed in him...

Now... when he got home, he still left his toys out, and felt cleaning was beneath him, but he went back to that church with his friend and heard the story again, and again...

And he started to pick up his toys... and even offered to sweep (which was a "one-time" offer, but still was something his mother treasured up in her heart...).

You may ask yourself - did this change the world? Did people stop fighting and kvetching? Is dirt still swept under the rug, while people settle for "good enough..."?

And you would be right to say that not much is different, just because this one little boy... who thought he was king - had met the Prince of Peace.

But...

As more and more little boys, and more and more little girls, meet this Prince...
they grow up... and begin to bring change to the world - change that
probably won't make the front page of the paper, but - change that will
gladden our hearts.

As more and more people of any and all ages kneel at the manger...
the King - who lives in that magnificent palace...
whose Son has joined him in the throne room...
- smiles.

The two kings - who met at the watering hole - discovered the difference a
peace child could make...

A little boy, who thought he was a king, was changed when he met the Prince of
Peace.

Even the friendly beasts - who were in *our* pageant - have figured this out.
Have we...? Because...

This may be "once upon a time," but -
it *could* be true...