

Praying for Peace - Dec. 8, 2024

When we talk about peace, often we just think of it as the absence of violence. But when it was talked about biblically, the Hebrew word *shalom* was used. *Shalom* means so much more than just the absence of something, the absence of violence; it has within it this idea of wholeness, of everything being as it should be, as God intended when he created us, when he created this world. And so, on this second Sunday of Advent, when we are praying for peace, we are praying for *shalom*, we are praying for our world, for this whole creation, to be restored to the creation God intended when he made it.

We are going to be focusing on four different places this morning. I know that those four places don't represent all of us in this congregation (we represent a lot of places in the world), but I thought today we would specifically focus in on Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, and Canada.

As we start, let's pray: God, we are coming before you, longing for *shalom*, longing for this world to be restored, reconciled, redeemed, longing for your peace. And so, God, as we learn about other places in the world that we don't all know about, and as we lift those places and those people up to you this morning, we know you are here with us, and we thank you. We thank you that you are a God who hears us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Kenya

Kenya is a very beautiful country, but we have so many challenges. One of them is bad governance, and that is the birth of every other problem.

Every five years we do elections, and we get new promises, but nothing happens. In 2027, we are waiting to do another election. So, that is something to be prayed for. Right now, Kenya is unstable. Just, I think it's last month, our

Deputy President was impeached and removed from power, and immediately another one was sworn in, which didn't go well with Kenyans.¹

And we are also having a lot of problems with unemployment. Every time I call Kenya, I feel sorry for them because the cost of living is too high. I know it's everywhere, but it's better where the cost of living is high, but at least there is work. But in Kenya, the cost is too high, but there's no work. So, that is also something to be prayed for.

Something else is political instability. That is actually the worst. And of late, I have seen even it coming into the church and that is something to pray to God about, because if the church is touched, I think everything else... because the church is the pillar of every country – the government is there, but without the church, I don't think the government can function well. So, we also pray for the churches in Kenya.

There are also environmental issues, education, skills gap, the health system also, because people are suffering; hospitals -- there are no drugs, there's no medicine, and so it becomes a problem.

Also, insecurity – There is too much insecurity, too much abductions, too much killings. I mean, Kenya is facing so many problems, then there is also crime.

Of course, we have other good things, but today we are focusing on what can bring peace in our land. And thank you very much for this opportunity. God bless you.

¹ On October 17, 2024, Kenya's Deputy President, Rigathi Gachagua, was impeached on charges of corruption and undermining the government.

Also, I forgot to say something. Pray for our young men in Kenya, the youth in Kenya, the Gen Z's, because we don't know what they are cooking right now as we approach 2027 elections. God bless you.

Nigeria

I'm happy to be among people here in Canada. I'm so glad and grateful for this great opportunity to talk about my country, Nigeria. Nigeria used to be a land that is flowing with honey. I remember in 1980/81, white people used to come to Nigeria – I had a teacher from Canada who taught me French in 1980, Mr. Miller by name, I still remember. But today, Nigeria has turned to another thing entirely.

We are people running away from...where citizens are not even safe there. What is happening in other parts, where we are talking of war, where people are killed in Gaza, in Ukraine, I tell you, the killings in Nigeria are more than those places. In Nigeria, we have kidnappers. People die to the kidnappers. Even when you give them ransom, they will still kill you, no matter how much you give them. Recently, two weeks ago, somebody had a church program, like Bible Study, in the church, and left their visitors at home, “Please wait, I'm going for 30 minutes for Bible Study in the church. Wait for me, I'll be back.” He left and did not come back until after six days. He was kidnapped. And where he was taken to, they lined them up, and picking them one after the other, killing them -- slaughtering them. (They put something on the head, and they fell down, each when they were picked. They put something on your head and you fall down.) But when it got to his own turn, they put something on his head; he did not fall, he did not shake. Then the man said, “Why did you bring this type of man here? Can't you see Jesus on him?” They took him and drove him that night to throw him in the river off a bridge. But fortunately, the rails on the bridge guarded him -- he did not fall into the river; he survived. That was how it came to me about this. He

survived. You can see what is happening? They lined people up, and this place that they were doing it, it was a mansion. You see, a big man came in to buy human parts there. That is the ritualists and the kidnappers.

The other one is hunger. Many people have died of hunger. What is happening in my country is famine. Not just something that maybe you are talking of expensive things having gone up, things like that. What you buy for 200 naira before, is being sold for over 2,000 naira now. If you are lucky, you eat once in a day. And when you don't eat well, you fall sick. What comes next? That you don't have enough money to buy food? What will happen at the end of the day? Will you have money to go to the hospital? Even the medical facilities are not there for you. People die of hunger.

One is *Boko Haram*. They go into churches and kill people. Consider a number of ways people are dying.

We have other people: Farmers cannot go to farms again. We have some other set of human beings, they call themselves *Fulani Herdsmen*, they kill farmers on the farm. And that is why there is scarcity of food. Farmers cannot go to farm because of the fear of being killed by some set of people. And those are the kind of people they call themselves. They refer to themselves as... That their right is to have political leadership. And that is why they are so powerful. Even when you arrest them, you, the complainer, become the accused. You, the complainer, will go to jail. And that is one of the reasons why I'm here today. So terrible in my country.

The political leaders... they're just amassing wealth for themselves. Recently the Chief of Army Staff was killed because they believe he is the backbone for the

president.² The Chief of Army Staff, that nothing was wrong with, they now say died of cancer.

Then the religious leaders too. Every religious leader in Nigeria wants to ride jets – personal jets, private jets. That is what is happening. The truth is dead in Nigeria. They hide the truth from people. All they are after is how they will make money from people. Many churches have turned into business centers. Let me give you an example, from before I left Nigeria, the one that I witnessed in a church (the pastor was eventually arrested -- the founder of that church): So that many people can come to the church, so that he can have a crowd in the church, not to have Christ-followers, do you know what he did? He killed his friend. The human parts of his friend are the four corners of the church as a foundation, and he put the heart at the altar. It was the wife that couldn't sleep again, that was worried by the conscience. The wife of the pastor came out to confess all this. Eventually he was arrested, and he confessed that that is what he did. Can you imagine?

My country needs great revival, for truth to prevail. If you have a call from Nigeria about churches, just please find out, find out about churches in Nigeria. The Bible says sin against the Holy Spirit is a sin that can never be forgiven. But I must say, this is what I witnessed. And that is what is happening in many other places that we don't know, in other churches.

You can be killed by religious leaders, by political leaders, by hunger, by rituals, by *Boko Haram*, by *Fulani Herdsmen*. We can imagine the war in other places. The war in Nigeria is more than the war we are seeing physically.

² According to [The Africa Report](#) (published by Jeune Afrique Media Group), “the Chief of Army Staff is often regarded within military circles as the gatekeeper of Nigeria’s democracy. Four former Chiefs of the Army have gone on to become heads of state.”

Employment-wise, many companies have left Nigeria. Companies that were established in the 60s/70s, they have left. Electricity supply – you can't get it any longer. I also had a company in Nigeria, but because of electricity supply and availability, I had to close down as well.

So, a lot is happening in my country. Please pray for that great revival. For God to bring peace back in Nigeria. There is insecurity in so many ways. Thank you for the opportunity. Thank you so much.

Ghana

I'll be talking about Ghana. Ghana is also in West Africa. And we have 16 regions – 16 administrative regions. The population of youth is large as compared to the other age groups.³ And so, one thing I would like us to first of all pray about is employment.

I think just about three years ago, an announcement was made by the authorities that there would no longer be any kind of official employment, especially in the government sector. And so, you have a lot of youth that are good, they are skilled, and a lot of them are leaving the country to be able to make good use of the skills they have. And they are leaving a lot of people who are less, I mean, kind of creating a brain drain in the system.

For some time now, by God's grace, there has been peace when it comes to how the youth react in terms of this kind of political instability. But just as our previous speaker mentioned, it starts like that, and if we don't pray, and if things don't change, yes, they may be seen as calm, the youth may be seen as calm, but since they are a lot, and things keep going like that, they may also try and start doing so many things, or kind of adopt what others are also doing. Because Ghana is known to be very hospitable – the borders are open, anybody comes in

³ According to [Ghana's 2021 census](#), (p. 18) 38.2% of the population that year was between 15 and 35 years old. Another 35.3% of the population were between 0 and 15 years old.

there, they do their own things, so the possibility that they can also learn from others or get involved in some kind of groups who may probably come in and start causing issues is so, so high.

Another thing has to do with health. We have a lot of youth that are dying at a younger age from non-communicable diseases. Personally, I have about four people I know who died from kidney disease last year and this year, and one was buried just last week. He was graduating from law school, and he died from a kidney issue, very young.

Environmental issues as well are also one of the challenges, by exploitation of natural resources (that was one project I worked on during the summer) and over exploiting the natural resources without any form of caution. So, it's also one major issue which is leading to hunger in some areas and also destruction of our water resources.

The last one would be for my family. Yes. My entire family is back home: my parents, my siblings, and my friends, church -- everybody is back home. And currently, my brother, he's very young, but he suffered from diabetes, and sometimes he can go to the clinic, and they tell you there's no medication. So, you can see that the youth are really suffering when it comes to health.

Canada

I am here to talk about Canada, of all places. When Elaine asked me, I'm like, "You're joking. Aren't there more Canadian-y Canadian people around?" But maybe, maybe this, too, is Canada, right?

Canada: We are blessed in so many different ways from sea to sea to sea. We have, around us and at our feet and at our fingertips, in our history, such a rich history of being a country that connects, a country that is open and kind, a country that cares. And I think that is in part due to our harsh winters. We

couldn't make it by ourselves; we needed to be cozy and to be cheek-by-jowl to survive the winter so that we can make it to the spring.

We are blessed with so many riches, not least of which are our diverse histories. People from every nation on earth come here. As a light in the darkness, as a place of hope and healing; it's a place that they can start anew and afresh. And we see that that's under threat. We see that we are increasingly growing comfortable with Canada just being for just us rather than a Canada that stands for justice for everybody.

It's funny that we should be talking about Canada at a time when we bring up peace because it was Canada that developed the idea of peacekeepers, people that would go into troubled places in the world to keep the peace, to make the peace, to negotiate the peace, to make sure the people that couldn't get along would at least respect the rules and regulations that they had, that we would stand in the breach and say, “these people over here and those people over there, you may not like each other, but we have to learn to work together to respect each other.”

It seems that we're forgetting our history as Canadians. And increasingly it seems that we are forgetting how to carry on a conversation with people that we don't agree with – that it's our way or the highway. But we have to learn as Canadians to, I think, maybe not be so nice, maybe not be so polite, and speak up, not just be bystanders, but be people that are up-standers that say, “we want to keep the peace. Actually, we don't want to just keep the peace, we want to make the peace between people that don't agree, people from different backgrounds, people from different places, people that have different views on all kinds of things and make Canada, this gigantic country, big enough for all of us. I may not have to agree with everything that you say, but I agree that you are a person made in the image of God, and you have the same rights and the same

opportunities that I have as a Canadian. So, the opportunity for a good education, the opportunity for a place to stay, the opportunity to get the health care that you need, the opportunity to be heard. I don't have to agree with you, but I will stand up to make a place for you so that we can live in peace together, so that you can have clean water to drink and food to eat, and a chance for equal protection under the law.”

As Canadians, as the people of God, we get to be a light in the darkness, a place where people can come to, to be at peace, and realise that this country is big enough for all of us; it's big enough for all the world to come and to be safe, to be loved, to have an opportunity to live whole lives. But that only happens if the people of God stand up, and speak up, and bring God's message of love and hope and forgiveness and make that real – not just stuff that we talk about: where we advocate for the people on the margins like Jesus did, and get in the good kind of trouble, not just keep the peace.

Sometimes keeping the peace means that we disturb the peace a little bit for the right reasons, so that people can be loved, so that they can know that they are God's people – they're made in God's image, and they have value, they're not just people under the bridge, they're not just people that have problems with drugs, they're not people that can't just get a job, they're not people that are suffering from mental illness, they're just like us. This is the Canada that my parents brought us to, to have a new life. And this is the kind of Canada that I would like to ensure that my children get to participate in.

I'm grateful for this country every day. I'm grateful for the people that don't look like me or sound like me or put enough salt or seasoning in their food, but still love me and I love them. This is the Canada that I would die to protect. This is the Canada that we have the opportunity to be a part of as God's people -- a bastion of hope and peace in a world that needs to hear that clarion call.