



SIEBENQUELL

Reflection on Psalm 122 (Part 2)

»Peace be within your walls«



SOURCE: R. MÖNNERJAHN 2011

»Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers«. As beautiful and attractive as this request may be, it is easy to overlook how much courage and great heartedness they demand of us. The pilgrim who prays these words is requesting security for the people behind the walls and in the houses of Jerusalem, even though there are certainly people in the city who love neither the city, nor its residents, nor the pilgrims who flock to it. Yet, here that are no restrictions of the wish for peace. He prays for peace and security for all who are present, not just for those who enjoy his sympathy, not only for the people who are close to his heart.

And this remarkable breadth of heart is just as much in demand today as it was in the day of the Psalmist. How many people in today's Jerusalem could utter this prayer? Can Arabian Moslems in Eastern Jerusalem pray this for the Jews in the western half of the city? Can the residents of the Jewish Quarter in the west of the city make this plea for the people behind the walls and in the houses of eastern Jerusalem?

Here we encounter a form of prayer where the prayer is not only used to further my personal agenda or desire.

»For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, Peace be within you.« After all, we can pray for peace in order that we might be left to our own devices, so that we will have it easier, in order that burden be taken from us. There is nothing wrong with that, but it is decidedly dangerous. If self-interest alone guides my prayer life, then what happens when noting burdens or irritates me in the situation of the others? What happens if I in no way suffer or take part in their lives? What happens when I am in no way affected by their fate, or even have advantages, if the others have no security? Can I, without reservation and without discrimination, pray for peace and security for the people behind those walls, for the people within those houses?

»For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good«! Because God is your midst, I will pray for your wellbeing. Naturally, that means that I can recognize that God dwells in the midst of these people. Immanuel (God with us) is the name of the child upon whom we call in Advent. But can I recognise this God in the midst of people who do not belong to my group, my circle of friends, to „my kind of people“?

This is assuredly not easy. For precisely in during these Christmas days we write cards with wishes for peace to the people who have made it onto our lists: who were good to us, whom we love and cherish and whom we wish good things. And that is a very good thing! But there remains the question: what do wish those people who are not on our list? For like the Psalmist, we are pilgrims, and like all pilgrims on the path to the goal of your yearning, we encounter many people, who carry totally different yearnings from the ones that move us.

So this Advent, I take a seat next to the Psalmist and try to become a more peace-full man of prayer. Should you wish to join us, I can assure you, that there is room for many more.

Erik Riechers SAC

December 16, 2014, Vallendar