

Jesus teaches a message of peace, forgiveness and love

While we wish that we lived in a world without war, it is all around us

Interestingly, the Bible uses war imagery because we ARE involved in a war...

A spiritual war—in which we embrace the victory of Christ and put on the full armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-20

We fight a spiritual battle against the forces of evil, the principalities and powers

Our defense is in wearing the “whole armor of God”—belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness

Shoes to proclaim gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of spirit

The author ends this section with a call to prayer

Quaker Cove story following the deaths of 2 caretakers—one by murder

I was asked to lead a cleansing of the camp over Memorial Day Weekend

Began with acknowledging the spiritual battle and Patty reminded us of our “spirit weapons”

We named the negative stuff that had happened at the camp over many years

Went to every building and cast out the unholy spirits in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth

The kids joined us and we went on a victory march around the camp

Now there's been a new beginning at Quaker Cove with Liz and Karl—a real turnaround

Quakers have language for this—called the Lamb's War

A lamb is an innocent animal and the phrase “the Lamb's war” seems like a paradox

The innocent lamb at war?

Yet this is part of this counter-violent message of peace, forgiveness, and love

The little lamb can overcome the hate, violence, and evil

The Lamb's war is a Quaker teaching, begun by James Nayler, George Fox and early Friends

*The Lamb's war is an eschatological vision in which all obedient followers of Christ the King, who is at once the suffering and all conquering Lamb, enlist in a total and unending struggle against evil in all of its forms in this present world until the Lamb and his army win victory and history comes to an end with the triumph of good over evil and the coming of God to dwell with [people].<sup>1</sup> T. Canby Jones*

We often think of John 1:29 - “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Christ as this kind of lamb symbolizes the forgiveness of sin

But Fox relied on another understanding of the Lamb of God, as found in the book of Revelation

e.g. Revelation 17:13-14

This is the conquering Lamb

It begins with an inward dimension in which there can be transformation of our beings

There can be an inner work in which sin loses all power over us

The Kingdom of God is realized within and without

But for Quakers, it was never simply and solely inward

This new life must be lived out as it moves beyond our being to following our Leadings

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<sup>1</sup> T. Canby Jones, *George Fox's Attitude Toward War*, chapter 7, *The Lamb's War and the Final Victory of God Over All Evil*, page 51.

For early Quakers—they began to find ways of expressing their internal beliefs

The Lamb's War expression of equality meant that Quakers wouldn't take off their hats in honor

They would not bow and used the common language to all people regardless of status

Since Christ forbade it, Friends refused to swear oaths—causing many to go to prison

They broke the law by meeting for worship and met in the courtyard when soldiers barred doors

Friends invented fair sale price as a testimony against cheating common in haggling over prices

Quakers offered fair treatment for the insane, just treatment of Indians and Blacks

All of these were aspects of the Lamb's war

Fox stressed that the Lamb's war will put an end to the ways in which the church abandoned the truth

Believing that the church had become a human invention full of religiosity and devoid of Christ

They fully believed Christ had come to end this apostasy of the church through the Lamb's war

Hence their commitment to simply waiting in the Presence of God—giving Christ full leadership

While divesting themselves of human interference and rules as much as possible

Fox and early Quakers believed so firmly in the judgment and final victory of the Lamb

That they could suffer violence and imprisonment confident the Lord would redeem them

They expected that all human rulers and powers would come to their end in this Lamb's war

False justices, rulers and magistrates would be unseated

They were confident in the widespread overthrow of social and ecclesiastical evil

Which was not only imminent but was already happening

And the Quakers were the spiritual revolutionaries to speed it along

All weapons of the Lamb's war are spiritual as given in Ephesians 6:10-20 and in the book of Revelation

None of this is about physical punishment and killing—nor a defense of using physical force

It is all about the victory of faith and the triumph of Spirit over the spiritual forces of evil

Quakers saw that this same heavenly conflict was going on here on earth

They were called to fight against it in the Lamb's army with weapons of the Lamb

Victory comes by faith and following the mind of Christ—thus they participate in eternal victory

Early Quakers spoke truth to power—going directly to the leaders of governments with their message

George Fox went to Cromwell, William Penn went to Charles II and James II

Strict sense of justice in refusal to leave jail when invited until the judge admitted false charges

4 Quakers are hung on Boston Commons because they wouldn't stay banished from the colony

The Lamb's war's universal mission: to bring everyone to an inward knowledge of Christ and his power

Early Friends were convinced they lived in the same life and power as the Prophets and Apostles

They sent missionaries to the Sultan of Turkey, King Louis of France, and the Pope in Rome

Fox wrote letters to the kings of Spain, Austria and the Grand Turk

Warning that they were about to be judged by the Lamb for their wrongdoing

But also to try to win them to the faith

They had a zeal to remake all of Christendom and if possible non-Christendom over to

...that which looked like the peaceable gospel kingdom of the Lamb

Early Friends spoke enthusiastically of the coming victory of the Lamb

They saw it happen all around them and believed Christ would bring it to completion

The victory of the Lamb would bring in the reign of virtue, love and peace

Fox said that in this victory of the Lamb "nothing shall reign or rule but righteousness itself"

But how can this be, given the persecution early Quakers faced  
And today we see anything but the reign or rule of righteousness  
We must pause and see the results of this Lamb's war, much as early Quakers did...

First, the original spirit and power of the apostles and the gospel are restored  
Early Quakers and we today fully believe we can live in the full power of the Gospel of Christ  
The Spirit has not gone into hiding nor is Spiritual Power reserved for the unusual time/place  
As Fox often said, "the Power of the Lord is over all"

Second, through the victory of the Lamb, the fallen nature of humans will be restored  
Fox talked about going back through the flaming sword into the Garden of Eden  
Where he knew a new way of being that should never fall  
The Lamb will restore those who are fallen to this new way of being

Third, as both a result of the Lamb's war and part of the Lamb's war...  
Sons and daughters are going out joyfully in the power and strength of the Almighty

The climactic result of the Lamb's war is in a new heaven and a new earth  
Early Friends believed this new heaven and new earth was already coming into being  
There was a new covenant with humanity  
A new Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth  
A life giving tree planted by living waters whose leaves will be for the healing of nations  
George Fox *heard a great Voice out of Heaven, saying, 'Behold the Tabernacle of God is with [People], and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his People, and God himself shall be their God with them.'* And this we witness, blessed be the Lord forever, who dwelleth with his People.<sup>2</sup>

Our response to this cosmic and universal victory in the Lamb's war is to sing praises to our God  
The saints of the Lamb sing in triumph over all who oppose them

*"...the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."* Revelation 17:14

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:1-5 NRSV*

Sermon based on *Following Jesus in the way of Peace*, resources from Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends for use during Peace Month January 2017. Sermon suggestions written by Paul Anderson and Cherice Bock. For this message, the following resource was used...

*George Fox's Attitude Toward War* by T. Canby Jones, originally published by Academic Fellowship, Annapolis, Maryland, 1972. Chapter 7 *The Lamb's War and the Final Victory of God Over All Evil*, pages 51-56.

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<sup>2</sup> George Fox, *A Testimony of What We Believe of Christ*, Gospel Truth Demonstrated, page 455.