

## “Peace Offering”

### Sermon – December 10, 2023 Stone Presbyterian Church

---

Since the pandemic we’ve had weekly presbytery leaders Zoom meetings most every Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. for about a half hour. Sometimes we have a guest speaker, sometimes we just share for whoever makes it. Because of my day job I’m only able to attend every so often. But I did attend this past Tuesday.

It was just a “sharing session” and somehow, we got to discussing memorable quotes and movies. Larry Beasley, our Stated Clerk (and moderator of these Zoom meetings), mentioned the 1987 movie, *The Princess Bride*. I said, “I love that movie! It is so clever and funny! In fact, I’ve made reference to it in at least one if not two of my sermons.” And then someone else also said how they loved it also and brought up an Internet meme, which I had also seen.

Then Friday night had a special on the late Norman Lear and one of the things they mentioned how he ended up being producer of the movie. And last night on television the AMC channel played the movie.

It seemed like God was telling me, “Go ahead—use the movie again in your sermon.” And I responded, “As you wish.” *[show slide]*.

For those who don’t know the movie, for today’s discussion you only need to know a little bit about one character, Inigo Montoya, played by the great actor Mandy Patinkin.

In the movie, we learn that a six-finger man killed Inigo’s father when he was just a boy, but let Inigo live. Inigo has spent his entire life becoming a skilled swordsman and looking for the six-finger man, to take revenge for his father. *[click slide black]*.

Inigo finally comes across him *[click to picture]* and confronts him with short speech he had been practicing his entire life. In fact, people on

## “Peace Offering”

### Sermon – December 10, 2023 Stone Presbyterian Church

---

the internet have noted that the speech structure is a good formula to use at networking events today. [\[click to title\]](#)

First, [\[click\]](#) a polite greeting, [\[click\]](#) “Hello.”

Second, [\[click\]](#) who you are, [\[click\]](#) “My name is Inigo Montoya.”

Third, [\[click\]](#) a relevant personal link with the person, [\[click\]](#)

“You killed my father.”

Fourth, [\[click\]](#) what you hope to get out of the exchange, [\[click\]](#)

“Prepare to die.”

After a dramatic sword fight (where Inigo repeats the speech several times) he prevails.

If you ask any fan of the movie, this is one of the top quotes.

But 10 years ago in an interview with CBS This Morning Show, Mandy

Patinkin, the actor who played Inigo, said he happened to catch the movie recently by accident.

And at age 58 or so heard, as if it were the first time, Inigo’s line at the end of the movie [\[click slide\]](#) where Inigo says to the hero, [\[click\]](#)

“You know, it’s very strange. I have been in the revenge business so long, now that it’s over, I don’t know what to do with the rest of my life.”

Mandy called it “the most potent line in the movie.” He said,

“I love that line and I love it for all of us. The purpose of revenge in my personal opinion is completely worthless and pointless. And the purpose of existence is to embrace our fellow human being, not be revengeful and to turn our darkness into light. And so that’s the line I love from the movie.”

How much of human history and current events has been about revenge? It can make for causes that sound noble and righteous, but inevitably

## **“Peace Offering”**

### **Sermon – December 10, 2023 Stone Presbyterian Church**

---

results in bloodshed. And then the loser vows and takes their revenge. And back and forth it goes.

But Jesus had a different message. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 he says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” And then later on, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.”

We’ve all heard those words, but how much do we live them? \*How\* can we live them? No protecting yourself? No punishment for criminals? No defense of our country? No retaliation against terrorists?

There are no easy answers. And that should humble us. That should shake our complacency. It means that pat answers are probably just band-aids or “feel good” actions. Instead, we should always be striving to solve the root problems that cause the strife.

For example, not everyone who is arrested is innocent, but our country leads the world in both total number of people incarcerated and per capita. We incarcerate more than 2 million prisoners nationwide. And while we have about 4.2 percent of the world's population, we house around 20 percent of the world's prisoners. Something is not right.

We cannot make a perfect world, but neither can we do nothing. We must continue to find ways to promote peace.

With the Israel-Gaza war we have people trying to force people to choose sides, but we need more people trying to find ways to peace.

## “Peace Offering”

### Sermon – December 10, 2023 Stone Presbyterian Church

---

Peace in Hebrew is *shalom* and in Arabic is *salam*—they share the same etymological root as each is the closest language to the other. *Shalom* or *salam* is not just a cessation of hostilities, though that is necessary, but a completeness or well-being—free from oppression, terrorism, and vengeance.

After 75 years, though, achieving true peace with Israel and the Palestinians seems intractable. Yet, we need to continue to try, including supporting others who may try, like Dr. Leonard Grob, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Fairleigh Dickinson University whom we had as a guest in October at one of our Tuesday presbytery leaders’ calls.

And in our own country our political rhetoric and actions have deteriorated to the point of insulting and degrading whoever disagrees with you and even vowing revenge if elected rather than articulating any policies to help the people or a vision that includes all people. *Shalom* for us seems elusive as well.

Some prefer to say, “It’s all in God’s hands; we’ll just wait for the Second Coming and gloat vicariously as all of ‘them’, the outsiders are punished.”

They seem to forget \*we\* are God’s hands—and feet and mouth and head. God expects us to promote *shalom* while we wait for Jesus’ return. Not for us to save the world, but to prepare the world. To be a light in the darkness of someone’s life. To comfort others even as God comforts us. Not because they deserve it, but because they need it.

The gospel lesson highlights this need of “active waiting.”

## **“Peace Offering”**

### **Sermon – December 10, 2023 Stone Presbyterian Church**

---

Unlike the other gospels, Mark starts off with a bang: “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Biblical scholar Eugene Boring points out, that the word gospel, or good news, in the ancient Greek context can mean good news “from the battlefield.” Thus, the “good news” is not sentimental message in a Hallmark card; rather it is good news from the place of struggle, a struggle in the wilderness where we prepare the way of the Lord and make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

And that struggle and preparation is not forcing our view of God on others; it is the preparation of our hearts to receive the Spirit of God so that our light might shine before others, giving glory to God, as evidenced by our good works of promoting peace—shalom—with joy and love.

And we remain steadfast through our ups and downs knowing from verse 8 in Isaiah 40 today, “The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.”

In the name of God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sustainer.  
Amen.