

From Our Pastor

April 28, 2018

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

The two men swapped military hardware for a metal shovels. North's leader Kim Jong Un and South Korea's President Moon Jae-in took part in a ceremonial tree-planting next to the Military Demarcation Line that forms the border between the two Koreas. In bright afternoon sunshine, the pair donned white gloves, grabbed shovels and tossed soil from mountains in both countries to the base of the already firmly installed pines. The symbols are rocking the world--the longest war in modern ages may be coming to an end.

On June 25, 1950, the Korean War began when some 75,000 soldiers from the North Korean People's Army poured across the 38th parallel. Stalin's Russian troops had advanced that far in their conquest of Asian territory during the final year of WW 2. By July American troops had entered the war on South Korea's behalf. American officials considered the conflict a war against the forces of international communism. They feared a wider war with Russia and China so fought a "limited war"--the first of several to follow. The fighting lasted until July 1953. By then almost 40,000 Americans had died in action in Korea, and more than 100,000 were wounded. In all, some 5 million soldiers and civilians lost their lives during the war.

The status of declared war never ended. After "truce talks" lasting over two years, the agreement was not an armistice, but an agreement to cease the open fighting but continue in a state of war. The DMZ line separating the Koreas became the most armed border in the world, lined with thousands of pieces of artillery and soldiers on both sides. The US stationed at least 25,000 soldiers along the DMZ in an effort to prevent another invasion of South Korea. Skirmishes and small battles between the two sides have continued for the sixty-five years since, and the war of words has been fierce.

The moment of the two trees is overpowering. Armed with bright-green watering cans, Moon poured water from Pyongyang's Taedong river and Kim watered the tree from the Han river in Seoul. The trees are named Peace and Prosperity. The leaders unveiled a smooth standing stone in front of the tree inscribed: "Peace and Prosperity Are Planted" before posing for photographers. Have peace and prosperity really come to the strife torn region?

If reports are accurate, North Korea has agreed in principle to dismantle its nuclear program. That would be great news for the world. But at what price and for how long? Recent history is a brutal schoolmaster. The October 1993 agreement, which sent over a billion dollars of US money to North Korea in exchange for the rogue nation ceasing it's nuclear development backfired. Kim got the money and used it to develop his nuclear weapons and paid no penalty for doing so. The history of agreements with the Soviet Union and other communist nations during the previous century is a litany of

dishonesty, deceit, and open violations. It has not been announced yet as to what price this new agreement comes with.

There is an old saying, "A person is only as good as his word." God's word teaches in many places the value of honesty and keeping one's word. Psalm 15:4 tells us that it is better to suffer than to break one's word. "...He who swears to his own hurt and does not change."

There are many verses that warn about dishonesty in financial and personal dealings, such as using dishonest weights and measures (Deuteronomy 25:13-16) and wealth gained by dishonest (Proverbs 13:11).

The two freshly planted trees-- "Peace" and "Prosperity" will continue to grow during the years to come. Peace and Prosperity for the Korean peninsula, which has known war for over seventy years, will only come if the leaders making this agreement keep their word and follow through with what they have agreed to by shaking hands and planting trees.

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