June 29, 2017  ***Peace is Patriotic*** Milepost 103

A patriot is defined as *one who loves his or her country and supports its authority and interests*. In a democracy, a patriotic citizen will hold officials accountable to do what is best for the nation. High ranking military leaders discouraged pursuit of the Iraq war (2003) because they knew it would not be in the best interest of our nation.

Based on the above definition, Jesus was a patriot. He loved his country. As a theocracy (rule by God), he supported Israel’s ultimate authority and Godly interests. Jesus challenged officials who were leading his nation in the wrong direction (Luke 19:41-44). His love for Israel however, did not limit his love for other nations. Why should any less be expected of Jesus’ followers?

American culture tends to equate patriotism with war. But as a few have noted recently, the health of our citizens is a matter of national security. When we devote our lives to health, education, conflict transformation, or the well-being of the most vulnerable in our nation, etc., we are defending our nation from internal threats which history has shown to be more dangerous than external threats. It is interesting to note that peace is the most prominent component of patriotism in German and Japanese cultures.

It becomes more possible to both love our nation and show compassion for all other nations like Jesus did, when our national interests are not selfish. Old Testament prophets demonstrated patriotism by risking their lives warning Israel that if they continued in sin (selfishness), their nation would be destroyed.

Less powerful democratic nations tend to have more global perspectives because they know they must attempt to protect their own interests in ways that respect the interests of other nations. They value diplomacy over war.

History repeatedly demonstrates that when a civilization or empire gets to the top of the power pyramid, it will yield to the temptation to abuse that power--often in the name of God or religion. Why would the United States be exempt?

Spanish cellist and conductor Pablo Casals wrote, “The love of one’s country is a splendid thing. But why should love stop at the border?” We are here because God so loved *the world*, and because Jesus, the Prince of Peace, did not allow his love for his country to stop at the border. -Gary Martin