

Daily Meditation 12-25-23

The Grace & Heart of Christmas, 2023

Good morning. A blessed Christmas to you all.

I understand that in Bethlehem and Nazareth today, there will be no public events, other than church itself, in order to draw attention to the war in Palestinian land.

And what I'd like to do is to share with you what I consider a really solid, substantive article referred to in my daily meditation, by Thomas Friedman, from the New York Times. Of course, Friedman is himself Jewish, and has spent a lot of time in Israel over the years, including many trips recently to Israel. So he knows a lot about the goings-on, behind the scenes.

The title of his essay is, "It's time for the US to give Israel some tough love."

He says it's time for the Biden administration to give Israel more than just gentle nudges about how it would be kind-of, sort-of nice, if Israel could fight this war in Gaza without killing thousands of civilians. Of course, 20,000 have been killed, most of them children.

It's time for the US to show Israel, this war's aim of wiping Hamas off the face of the earth is not going to be achieved, at least not at a cost that the US or the world would tolerate, or that Israel should want. It's time for the US to tell Israel to declare victory in Gaza and go home. Because right now, the Israeli prime minister is utterly useless as a leader. Unbelievably, he is prioritizing his own electoral needs over the interests of Israelis, and the interests of Israel's best friend, President Biden.

He says what the US should tell Israel, is this:

Total Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, in return for all the Israeli hostages, and a permanent ceasefire under international supervision, including U.S., NATO, and Arab observers. And no Palestinians are released from jail.

He says, *In reading the mood of the country of Israel at this time, the overwhelming majority of the country wants their 120 hostages returned.*

He says, *The hostage issue is making Israelis crazy, This is the number one goal of the people, for good reason, as it's making rational military decision-making impossible. Israel has inflicted vast damage on Gaza's main urban areas, and the tunnel network, and killed thousands of Hamas fighters, along with tragically, all of these other citizens. But a humanitarian disaster has resulted. And Israel has no plan, never had a plan, even before the war started, how the humanitarian crisis will be managed and remediated, and how to repair things after a war. Also, the Israeli Defense Forces, the leadership there, is very uncomfortable being asked by the far right government of Netanyahu, to fight a war in Gaza without a clearly defined political objective, timetable, or mechanism, to win hold peace.*

And so, says Friedman, It's best to just get out. The person who started the terrible war, and obviously didn't care about the destruction of thousands of innocent Gazans, managed the clean up — that is the leader of Hamas, Sin Mar — This would be the best way to discredit and destroy him, his political mood, and let the world give its feedback to Sin Mar about what he's unleashed.

So I think all of this is real. We're talking here about the birth of Christ in the Holy Land, the so-called Holy Land. The Holy Land is a terrible place of destruction at this time in history.

So clearly, we all have on our minds this reality, in the midst of the promise of peace. And I think Friedman is being very down to earth and real, and in the best sense of the word, passionate, in trying to consider the needs of both Palestinians and Jewish people.

Meat and substance for meditating on, even and especially on the day of Christmas, that promises peace to all people of good will.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.