

Beautiful Peace

I sent this on 28th April 2022 to the 53 people who then received the email I send out about each new painting.

Dear all, this is a different kind of peace painting. It does not feature the mistiness of so many of them, nor the muted light and pastel colours of others. It is set in full daylight on an ordinary day. But peace there must be, because red deer would be spooked by anything less than peace. As I was painting this painting I was thinking about John 14 and indeed I re-read it several times during the painting process. I also had the music of Christian baroque violinist and composer of masses, requiems and motets, Heinrich Ugnaz Franz Von Biber playing constantly though the painting process.

I was greatly helped by a particularly nicely photographed piece of countryside with a pond, a road down the right side and a driveway across the background. I removed items like fences and the driveway, the road and some tractor ruts from the grass. The red deer came from various public domain sources such as Pixabay, Unsplash, Flickr and the Wikimedia commons. So too did the three species of orchid which feature fairly prominently in the foreground.

To the right, as you look at it, the orchids are broad leaved helleborines (*Epipactis helleborine*), the first orchid I ever found that was not either an early purple orchid or common spotted orchid, and a species I came to know extremely well. They are very variable, as illustrated in the plants in the painting. To their left is a triangular clump of white helleborines (*Cephalanthera damasonium*) one of the commonest of the *Cephalanthera* species and one of only two I have seen in the wild. The other is the marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*) which I have added as two clumps beside the pool.

Jesus says, in John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." This is in the middle of a passage about the Holy Spirit. It is a beautiful passage and we are undoubtedly beneficiaries of the Holy Spirit as promised. I believe the images in these paintings are produced by the Holy Spirit and my role is to persuade a computer to produce a painting that matches the images in my head. Today, a different peace painting, which I have chosen to call 'Beautiful Peace', not a direct biblical quote, but intended to refer to Jesus' words in John 14. Love from Rick

Doves

Like a lot of my previous paintings it contains a dove, in this, and all future cases, a Eurasian collared dove common in Israel and likely to be the dove mentioned at various points in scripture. I had seen white domestic doves on a roof in Grantchester and they were always very visible, so when I started painting it seemed an obvious colour to use, especially as many of the doves on public domain sites are also white. However, nowhere in scripture does it mention the colour of doves except once in Psalm 68, where verse 13, says "Even while you sleep among the sheep pens, the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver, its feathers with shining gold." So it is not really the dove colour that is discussed.

Two species of dove are common in Israel and it is not clear to which the references to doves refer; however, Eurasian collared doves are resident all year whereas turtle doves are summer residents only. This means it is likely that for much of the year at least, only collared doves would be available for sacrificial purposes in biblical times, so it seems unlikely that turtle doves only were intended. Anyhow, the Eurasian collared dove is likely to have been used for all winter sacrifices. A number of English Bibles name the doves as turtle-doves

and others simply as doves, the latter to be preferred for the reasons stated above. You might be wondering, 'why does he not just carry on using white doves like everyone else?'

I could, but when I started painting I did not think about any potential implications of the colour of the doves that I painted. Then I read what Lewis Hamilton had to say about Black Lives Matter. Now I happen to think that Lewis is a very great man, and he is an active and open Christian. (the Guardian "...I feel God has his hand over me." It is a belief strengthened by regular prayer and attendance at church. "I go with a couple of my close friends," he said. "We meet, we go for breakfast and then we go to church together. We leave most often feeling enlightened and empowered, it's like a re-centring.") As far as Black Lives Matter Lewis has been openly supportive as you would expect, having been the victim of racism all his life. On Instagram he said "We cannot be silent today! We need your voice. We need you to get out of your comfort zone and support us by being ant-racist and letting people know where you stand in this fight."

I thought long and hard about the fight against racism, which I support wholeheartedly. I saw apartheid up close and personal in 1960's Zimbabwe (or Rhodesia as the white supremacist state was then called) and it is not pretty. Although I never intended anything by selection of a white dove except to maximize its visibility, I will never use one again. It had no implications to me as the producer of the artwork, but it is absolutely possible for it to have implications in the mind of the person looking at the painting and I cannot control those. A white supremacist person might interpret the whiteness of the dove very differently from the intention of the artist.

It was an easy decision to make, and all subsequent peace paintings will use this naturally grey dove. I thought about using a pigeon, but a pigeon is bigger than a dove and the writers of the Bible distinguish clearly between dove and pigeon. When I start selling the paintings on the shop to raise money for Arthur Rank Hospice Charity, Living Well Service, I will undoubtedly go through each painting and replace the dove with a natural Eurasian collared dove before the item goes on sale. All of the peace paintings that I have added here at Under the Thinking Tree have been revisited to replace the dove with a Eurasian collared dove. The Threshold paintings on Under the Thinking Tree will all be changed as well. Just not this week.