Dessa Shapiro, Period 5, 9/15/22

"Civil Peace" Analysis Essay

The story Civil Peace follows the life of Jonathan Iwegbu, a soldier who has returned home after the civil war in Nigeria. He returns to find joy and comfort in his family, while trying to find his place within the peace and start to rebuild. During this time he manages to find old possessions and some fortune which lands him with 20 pound notes. In the end, thieves come to his house one night and take the money from him. But despite the misfortune he is not angry or distraught, knowing that the loss is of little significance.

The story focuses on concepts or materialism and understanding what “things” mean to people. There are many different viewpoints of the effects of materialism, Bertrand Russell states *“It is the preoccupation with possessions, more than anything else, that prevents us from living freely and nobly.”* I believe there is much truth to the statement. In “Civil Peace” Jonathan finds himself living freely, when he is first returning from the war, he is joyuse to see his family intact. “ As a bonus he also has his old bicycle—a miracle too but naturally not to be compared to the safety of five human heads.” From the start the author is showing the reader Jonathan’s priorities, and that although having this thing is an added benefit, he prioritizes his family. Simply happy to have kept the things he truly cares about. The story later goes on to show him making a living for his family and experiencing joy in obtaining things for others. Although he gains mainy things to be prideful for, he never gives them any real value of importance, using that as a tool to work freely towards other goals. He finds a way to coexist with his possessions instead of becoming preoccupied with them.

Jonathan often repeats the phrase “Nothing puzzles God” as a way to stay things going as they should. This mindset helps keeps him away from a materialistic mindset. After seeing so much lost from the war , he decided to take and lose things as they come, because they can be found and lost in a moment. So instead of staying attached to fleeting things, he changed to free himself from the burden. With this mindset he is able to overcome the obstacles he faces. After Jonathan is robbed, he speaks to his neighbors “‘I count it as nothing’ he told his sympathizers, his eyes on the rope he was trying.’what is \_egg-rasher\_? Did I depend on it last week? Or is it greater than other things that went away with the war?” In his speech, he addresses the unimportance of money, telling the people that things like money can disappear easily. He equates the lost money to the things lost in the war, pointing out that things so easily lost can not hold true importance. He is saying all the issues associated with material things can be disposed of; Since the only importance they hold is determined by what people are led to believe. In this instance he is showing a nobility of admitting defeat, taking the loss with peace instead of strife. Choosing to act with a rational mind, instead of a venomous one.

Jonathan is someone who has lived through a brutal war, anc scene his friends, family, neibors and country lose everything. Although tragic, loss can bring out peoples true desire; Much like how sincere joy can not be felt without having felt try sorrow first, devastating loss can procure things that you might not have otherwise. In this case Jonathan has received a new perspective about what's important to him. He learns what it means to need and want, and prorated the need above all else, letting the want come as it may.