

Being the Church at Brentwood Presbyterian

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November 13, 2011

**Psalm 8 and 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
(Hymns – 301, 472, 475, 483)**

Let's begin with a very brief review
of the themes we've been reflecting on
in our worship and learning together
over the past two years.

We began with the Psalms,
that rich and provocative prayer book of the Bible
that has played such an influential role
in shaping the piety and practice of Presbyterians.
We approached a different Psalm each week
with a teachable spirit.

We wondered how God would use that passage that week
to search us and support us
as we matured into a flourishing faith in Jesus Christ.

One of the dominant themes throughout the Psalms,
expressed so powerfully in Psalm 8 that we read together this morning,
is the glory and majesty of God.
God's greatness is seen in all the world,
in the whole universe,
from the vast expanses of space to the nano dynamics of our inner beings.
The Psalms affirm over and over again
that God invented reality.
Reality can only be seen as it truly *is*
if we acknowledge and realize that God created it.
Just who that God is,
what that God does and how that God does it,
is seen most clearly in his self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

God's message and promises
came first through a people,
through Israel who was chosen to *be* a blessing
and make that blessing known through the world
by their way of being in the world.

God realization of his vision of *Shalom*,
of that divine peace that transcends our current understanding
and brings such a deep joy and contentment,
came in the witness and work of Jesus Christ,
God in the flesh,
full of grace and truth.

If you want to know this God who invented reality
and who guides its evolution,
then look to Jesus Christ.
In him, God reveals himself
as the creative source of faith, hope, and love –
faithful in his love for these human creatures
to whom he gave the intriguing and energizing responsibility
of ruling over the work of his hands,
over everything God had made, was making, and would make.
That rule, following the example of God in Jesus Christ,
would be a rule of wisdom, grace, and peace.
We saw the attitudes and behaviours that would produce those consequences
in the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

To be church,
to be a blessing as God's chosen rulers of his creation,
we must continually grow into maturity in Jesus Christ,
to be in Christ and be like Christ.

This happens not through our own power or efforts,
but by the continual work of God's Holy Spirit within us,
searching and provoking us to love and good deeds.

How that might be lived out in the real world of God's invention
is vividly portrayed in the parables of Jesus,
those wonderful stories we have been exploring together
this past year.

Most of them focus on the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is like this

The Kingdom of God is like that

It may be hidden from most, but it is the most vital force in the universe.

Things and power can blind you to it, but it is real and will prevail.

It brings diverse people together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

In this world-wide community,
knowing God in Jesus Christ
through the loving work of the Holy Spirit,
being a blessing by being just and being genuine and virtuous,
is God's gift to us in Jesus Christ.

Through that gift of redemptive grace in Jesus Christ
we become more of our true selves and see things differently,
see them from God's perspective,
see them with God's compassion.
And that changes our lives forever!

This is what Paul affirms in his salutation to the Corinthians
in his first letter to that fumbling and fractious church.
His focus is not on their problems, but on their potential in Christ.
He does not dismiss them because of their problems,
but rather reminds them of the gifts they enjoy
to pursue their calling in Christ with faith, and hope, and love.

It is good to be reminded of how God sees us
as we embark on our exploration of being the church at Brentwood Presbyterian.
Listen again for that in this passage from 1 Corinthians:

*May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.
I always give thanks to my God and you because of the grace he has given you
through Christ Jesus. For in union with Christ you have become rich in all things,
including all speech and all knowledge. The message about Christ has become
so firmly established in you that you have not failed to receive a single blessing,
as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm
to the end, so that you will be faultless on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
God is to be trusted, the God who called you to have fellowship
with his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

Being church anywhere, and certainly here at Brentwood Presbyterian,
means living in and for the grace and peace that comes from Jesus Christ.
It means developing our knowledge and speech about Jesus Christ.
It means trusting God's faithfulness in and to the church,
whatever may be happening around and to us.
It means enjoying the riches that God has given us
and using them in the service service of his kingdom.

That's what we will explore more deeply together
over this coming year here at Brentwood.
I trust it will enrich our practice of being the church in our neighbourhood.
I trust it will help us grow both in wisdom and in impact.
I trust it will help us enjoy peace and contentment in our faith.

With God's faithful guidance and encouragement, I'm sure it will.