

Being the Church at Brentwood

It's All About Christ's Love

Ps 14 & Ephesians 3:14-21

July 29, 2012

476, 205, 314, 722

In trying to dig deep into the meaning
that God intends us to get
from the written words of Scripture
that point to the significance of God's living Word in Jesus Christ,
students of the Bible often pay attention to the forms of the words,
to the kind of literature in which the words have been passed down.
There are stories, parables, hymns, instructions, and prayers,
to name just the main forms.

We noted already that the letter to the Ephesians
in a collection of many forms of literature
that was circulating in the early church
to help form Christians as disciples and witnesses
to what God has done for the creation in Jesus Christ.
This circular letter begins with
with a review of the way God's purposes in creation
are worked out in history
and brought to completion in Jesus Christ.

The divine plan conceived by God at creation
is brought to actuality in Christ's loving presence here on earth.
This is the Christian worldview,
the Christian way of understanding reality.
It began with and continues to be infused and animated by God's love.

The history of humankind really is all about Christ's love,
about the love of God that culminates in the accepting love
seen and experienced in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension
of Jesus Christ.
The power of that accepting love to complete what was started in Jesus Christ
continues to work within us and among us
as the Holy Spirit shapes people for witness and service
in a world desperately in need of recognizing this power in its midst.

Humans in the past, as today,
have strayed far from God's original intention for them.
They have ignored and dismissed their Creator,
developed the illusion that they can get along with their Sustainer,
lived in the false belief that they do not need a Redeemer.
They hold the misguided conviction that they alone are in control.

Increasingly, in our part of North America especially,
Christian beliefs and practices are being ignored
or dismissed as delusional and misguided.
We no longer live in a faith-friendly culture.
Many see faith as a divisive element in human society,
one religion pitted against another in bitter and violent conflict.
And there is plenty of evidence for that view.
Christ's love often gets lost in the midst of human alienation and fear.
Christ's presence and power often gets hijacked by human aggression and greed.
The church becomes complicit in division and dissension.

Paul's prayer for the church
that we read this morning in Ephesians 3:14-21
puts things back in a proper perspective for us.

Let's take a closer look
at what we are declared to be and called to do
as disciples of and witnesses to
the love of God seen most clearly in Jesus Christ.

The true Father,
the loving origin of all families,
is the God who came in Jesus Christ
and remains in the work of the Holy Spirit.
We have an intimate relationship with this Presence,
a relationship in which God always welcomes our approach.
We are his beloved children,
created for the purpose of being stewards of his creation,
blessings to each other and all the world.

It is hard to imagine a closer relationship
than the one God has initiated and invited us into
in Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.
Paul talks about Christ making his home in our hearts.
In Paul's day and culture, the heart – *kardia* in Greek –
was the centre of vitality in human beings,
the root of religious life and moral conduct.

Our lives are rooted and grounded in this intimate relationship
in which God first loves us in Jesus Christ
and invites us to return to a conscious and considerate relationship with
his triune presence – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Every dimension of our energy as human beings
is enfolded into this relationship –
physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.
Our whole beings are indwelt by Christ's love.
That is the energy seeking to form us as disciples and witnesses.
It really is all about Christ's love.

The church Paul is praying will arise is formed as Christ's body
to be the primary expression of this love on earth.
That church is about Jesus Christ and his mission.
It's about creating a space where Christ can engage people
in his work of redemption in the world.

It's not about ministers and their personalities.
It's not about protecting or propagating ideas.
It's not about survival or success in the world's terms.
It's not about power and prestige as the world sees them.

It's about being the family of God in whom Jesus Christ dwells,
in whom people can experience the presence and power of Christ's love
in the very core of their beings,
in their heart of hearts where their life originates and from which their life flows.
People come to know their souls are filled with the light and love of Christ,
however disjointed and despairing they may have become.
They allow the Spirit to remove the dark film from their eyes,
to break through the gloom that is clouding their awareness.
They join joyfully in the wonderful doxology at the end of this prayer
that we will use to end this sermon:

*To him who by means of his power working in us
is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for,
or even think of:
to God be the glory in the church
and in Christ Jesus for all time,
for ever and ever! Amen.*