

Being the Church at Brentwood

Knowing Jesus Christ

Ps.46 & Ephesians 1:15-23
(Hymns –301, 357, 489, 340)

November 20, 2011

I don't know about your,
but I found it an inspiring experience during this past week
to reflect on the Scripture passage from Ephesians this morning
knowing that many others in this congregation were doing the same thing.

There is something about doing something,
even something as simple as reading the Scriptures,
together.

So, thank you for engaging in this discipline
of being the church at Brentwood this past week,
and I look forward to continuing and strengthening this practice
over the coming weeks.

Next week we will be reflecting together on Romans 8:9-17.

The focus for our reflections will be our true potential
in the Spirit of God as we see it in Jesus Christ.

The insert is in your calendar and the text is on the website –
www.brentwoodpc.ca.

There is also the ability to leave a comment on the website,
so we can have a virtual conversation
about the meaning of the passage during the week.

This morning, from the Ephesians passage,
I want to focus on prayer and power.
What can we learn from these verses
about how to pray as a church
and about the power that God gives to the church?

Ephesians was probably a circular letter to early churches,
not a specific letter addressed to the Ephesians alone.

It seeks to address in more general terms
what it means to be the church in those early days
when new people were coming to know and follow Jesus Christ.

We're in a similar situation today at Brentwood.
We, too, live in a community where church involvement is not the norm.

At our Presbytery mission event yesterday,
Dale Woods from The Presbyterian College in Montreal
was listening with us and reflecting on the ideas
generated in our conversations.

One of the things he reminded us of
was that, in 1950, 70% of the population of Canada went to church.
Sixty years later, it's somewhere between 13% and 17% nationally.
We know that percentage declines the further west you come.
In Metro Vancouver, it's closer to 10%.

So, people will no longer become involved in the church through habit.

It will be a conscious choice,
a determination to explore a proven way of flourishing,
a decision to become part of a community
that serves the Kingdom of God
by being a blessing to the whole of creation.
They will become involved
because the Spirit has gently and patiently
brought them to a deep knowing of Jesus Christ,
a knowing in which they find themselves in their true home.

I'm using the image of home here
to point to the quality of nourishing relationship with our true Family
that we find in knowing and being with the Holy Trinity,
God as Father, Jesus Christ as Brother, and the Holy Spirit as Mother.

All those who are in Christ,
who the Father desires to save by reconciling them himself,
all those people are our brothers and sisters.

Think of the children who will enjoy the gifts
we have stuffed into our shoe boxes over the past few weeks.
They are our brothers and sisters in Christ,
members of the family of God.

These boxes are an invitation to come home to the family celebrations,
to the celebration of our oldest brother, if you will,
who is now head of the family business of blessing the world.

Being the church at Brentwood
means providing a space where people can come to know Jesus Christ.
That knowing is not simply some kind of intellectual assent to doctrines,
to this belief or that belief over which theologians argue endlessly.

Don't get me wrong.

I think what you believe is important.

As we dip into Ephesians later in the year,
we will find this circular letter to early churches
is seriously concerned about distorting beliefs within the community.

But what it means to know Jesus Christ is deeper than mere belief.
It's being open to the work of the Spirit within us and among us.
It's sensing, feeling, and knowing – all in an integrated way -
that God has and continues to enow us with his gifts of light and grace.
From those gifts arise a gratitude and hope
for the wonderful blessings God has promised
and has delivered in the life and work of Jesus Christ –
through his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

Prayer is enabled in us by the Holy Spirit
as a way of remaining constantly open to those blessings,
of knowing the energies or glories of God as they infuse our whole beings
and empower us to be in Christ and for the world,
in the same way God became incarnate
so that the world might be reconciled to him.

So prayer, very simply, opens us to the power of God
and is the means by which we align ourselves with that power.
It's focus is on God's will being done on earth as in heaven,
God's kingdom coming on earth as in heaven.
We are energized by God's Spirit,
filling us with the purpose that flows from Jesus Christ as our head,
so that we can be the body of Christ in the world.

In this passage, we're reminded
that the most revealing expression of that power
is the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.
God's power is seen most clearly
in the events in God reconciled the world to himself.
From that reconciliation flow
the wonderful blessings we enjoy as God's people
and that we are called to share with the whole world.
And from the energy flow in those blessings,
we find the wisdom and strength to be Christ's body in and for the world.

In prayer, then, we are aligned, through the work of the Holy Spirit,
with the energies or manifestations of the glory of God.
Prayer is about aligning ourselves with the will of God.
With that attitude – seeking to grasped by the flow of the energies of God –
will we be blessed with the power of God through our prayers,
that power that can radiate our lives with blessing and healing.