

Being the Church in Christ:

Wisdom from Pastor Paul

(The Brentwood Sermon Series for 2015)

Memorize & Ponder Text – Romans 13:10

(Full Reading – Romans 13:8-10)

Week of Sept 6 – Sept 13, 2015)

Who Is My Neighbour?

Romans 13:10 (NRSV)

Love does no wrong to a neighbor;
therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.
(Romans 13:10)

*Throughout 2015, the Christian community at Brentwood Presbyterian Church will be considering how to be the church in Jesus Christ, guided by the wisdom of Pastor Paul. We invite you to **listen** for what the Spirit is saying in the text, then **question** how those insights might change the ways you see things and act in the world. Share your thoughts during the week on the meaning the Spirit creates for you in this text by posting a comment on our website – www.brentwoodpc.ca.*

A Provocative Pondering

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us provoke one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together ... (Hebrews 10:23-25a)

But what happens when the needs of our neighbours overwhelm us?

That is the agonizingly complex question that faces us with the increased awareness of the refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe that has hit our screens over the past two weeks.

The image of the drowned body of that young boy on the beach that sparked this awareness so suddenly and so powerfully pierces the soul of everyone who sees it. But with that stimulus, what do we choose to do in response?

The Bible, as Paul points out so powerfully in this week's reading, is clear: Love your neighbour as yourself and do them no harm. That is the sum of all of God's law. That is the gratitude that God's seeks in response to his love for us, for being for us, and with us, and in us.

I don't have any easy answers regarding our response to this latest wave of refugees. Given the scope of the crisis, it will take a collective effort on the part of the international community to deal with the pressing need to remove them from harm and begin the serious negotiations that will remove the circumstances that led to this crisis. In all of this, from a Christian stance at least, the guiding principles must be seeking justice for all, working for peace among all, and seeing beauty in all. Such further movement towards the Reign of God will take place one conversation after another. Things that harm, such as military aggression, have proven to simply worsen things. We must seek and support alternatives to this approach, one conversation after another.

That, at least, is how I read Paul's powerful wisdom for this week, written as it was for people living in the heart of the empire of his day.