

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood – Feb 28, 2016

Third Sunday in Lent

Notes for the sermon on Repent amidst Fear and Division

Luke 13:1-9 – Sermon Text = Luke 13:5

**“No, I tell you;
but unless you repent,
you will all perish just as they did.”
(Luke 13:5)**

[Hymns = 194, 208, 773]

Key focus = repentance is a divinely-initiated turning towards the life that God created us to live – turn from whatever distracts and deflects us from following a loving Creator & Saviour, from forming a just community, and from the disciplines of flourishing



Distractions & Deflections

- There is a theme that runs through the Scriptures – choose life or death – especially, Deut 30:19 – in Jesus view, you had chosen death if you followed the Roman Emperor as Lord or if you had chosen the dominant interpretation of Judaism in his day that set apart and better than everyone else if you were a pure and obedient Jew
- While the choice seems stark, we often choose death by being distracted and deflected by sources of death – rooted in fears and divisions – fear turns us inward and divides us from others - draws us away from and obscures the only true source of life – the loving Father of Jesus Christ present in the Spirit

What God is Turning Us To

- This warning is an invitation – not coercive, but persuasive – turn your attention to the true source of life and you will have help in doing that from the God who wants your attention – that is the loving Creator who wants to be your Redeemer so that you can participate in the Commonwealth that God is bringing to completion in partnership with his beloved human friends – away from lesser gods to the true God
- God is also turning us to be citizens, fully responsible participants, in a just and peaceful community that encompasses the whole of creation – away from more limited loyalties to a focus on SHALOM or flourishing for the whole of creation – that will be the focus of our ‘ted talk’ this coming Saturday with Janette McIntosh
- God is also turning us to be faithful followers – exercising, in company with the Spirit, self-awareness and self-control in shaping our lives to contribute to God’s Commonwealth – away from self-centred and self-indulgent limited lives to a life dedicated to the mission of Jesus Christ

Enjoy the Discomfort of God’s Grace

- This kind of turning in our lives will generate discomfort – it involves change – for the better, but change nonetheless – popular perception that we cannot change – too hardwired – but research is how we are designed to work as human beings in the last couple of decades reveals that is not the case – we are designed by God for and invited by God to step into continual change – transformation – conversion – repentance – redemption – the key question for us is whether we accept the invitation to become what we are designed to be
- This will mean turning away from ‘lesser’ things – loyalties and activities that serve ‘lesser’ gods – visions that see only ‘lesser’ goals and aspirations
- Good to remember the communal disciplines that we often take for granted – gathering for worship, learning, and fellowship – dispersing to serve – repeated week after week after week – keeps us focused on the life that God offers – nourishes us to turn away from those things that distract and deflect us into the lesser ways of death
- Reinforced by the personal disciplines of prayer, study, and contribution
- All to support us in dealing with the discomfort of change and nourish us in the transformative enjoyment of the flourishing to which God is constantly invited us to turn
- Brings to mind the oft-quoted nugget of wisdom from Augustine – ““You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you.”