

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood, Apr 3, 2016

First Sunday after Easter

Notes for the sermon on What is the Peace of Christ?

John 20:19-30 – Sermon Text = John 20:21

**Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”**

[Hymns = 534, 530, 556]

**Key focus = the Peace of Christ is the reality of friendship with God,
with each other, and with our true self (a beloved friend of God),
that brings flourishing to the world as we discover and nourish
the seeds of SHALOM wherever we go**



The Garden of Love and Delight

- Last week we talked about Easter as a tale of two gardens – the first garden was with Adam and Eve, where intimacy and friendship with God and with each other and with our true selves reigned – God’s intent in creation – a flourishing world in which all the joy and delight of Ps 150 was the day-to-day reality for the whole creation
- that was broken through arrogant disobedience and rebellion – a line from Joni Mitchell’s *Woodstock* – a song about getting back to the garden – recognizes that we are “caught in the devil’s bargain” – you’ll get security, acceptance, and power if you break away from God

- the second garden came Jesus Christ – a space where God repaired that rift and reconciled humanity and all of creation to himself – what happened that first Easter is that big – the course of the history of this creation changed forever and for good – thought this morning of that lovely old Shaker hymn – ‘Simple Gifts’ – a ‘dancing song’ – most powerful line = “Twill be in the valley of love and delight’ – that’s the Peace of Christ
- with Christian communities from the days of Pentecost on, in good times and bad times, through wildly varying degrees of faithfulness and flourishing, the church universal has exchanged the Peace of Christ, like we do near the beginning of our service every week – it’s a sign of welcome in mutual respect and affection for all who have gathered – not always comfortable for everyone, but then God has gathered us all here to be confronted by the reality of the Peace of Christ
- that Peace has deep and resonant associations with the work of God in this creation – for Jesus and his followers, picked up on the Hebrew affirmations in the *Shekinah* and the *Shema* – the brilliance and affection of God being with us and for us so we can flourish as blessings to the creation – that is God’s SHALOM or universal wellbeing - that is what we are sent to be, just as the Son was sent by the Father in the Spirit to reconcile and bless the whole creation

Sent to Do What?

- This Peace is not a gift we can hoard or that is confined to our churches – in Jesus Christ, it is given first and foremost to the entire creation – the church (the followers of Jesus Christ) is sent into the world to find where God has sown the seeds of this SHALOM and nourish them there to flourish – God sows the garden and we tend it – we are stewards of the Peace of Christ everywhere we go
- Three ways of tending worth remembering as the gardens about us burst into blossom and leaf:
 - ***Go with a forgiving generosity*** – remember who these guys are that Jesus is addressing in our text this morning – those who, in his greatest agony and time of need, deserted him – every last one of them – ran off to hide in the attic in hopes of avoiding the cost of discipleship – the Peace of Christ is the generosity of forgiveness, no matter what needs to be forgiven to free you for flourishing – totally undeserved and totally unconditional – but totally ours
 - ***Go with courageous compassion*** – at the heart of this sending, this mission, is Jesus’ summary of all the law and the prophets – love God with your whole being, your neighbour, and yourself – in a world of fear and division, to be that kind of compassionate presence takes a courage only intimacy with God can sustain
 - ***Go with joy and delight*** – not a heavy burden – an expression of who God made us to be – as Ps 150 concludes, let everything that breathes praise the Lord and his SHALOM
- That’s the Peace of Christ that is always with us as we are sent to be blessings