

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood, Apr 17, 2016

3rd Sunday after Easter

Notes for the sermon on The Winter of our Discontents

Ps 23 and John 10:22-30 – Sermon Text = John 10:22-24

At that time of the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

[Hymns = 256, 358, 368]

Key ideas = dreariness and desolation of winter – corruption and condemnation dominate our self-talk and our perceptions of everything around us – damp and cold, huddled into ourselves for whatever warmth and wellbeing we can generate, which is not much – but God’s Messiah, Jesus Christ, brings new wisdom about how things really are – filled with God’s goodness and mercy – always there with us and for us



A Letter from the Governor General on ‘Sunny Ways’ in Canada

Reading the *Globe and Mail* over breakfast yesterday and ran across a reprint of one of David Johnston’s ‘Dear Canada’ letters – it’s become the focus for this sermon – its affirmations of our potential were mirrored in the discontents that we confessed in our prayer of approach – [read the letter] – so, the goodness and mercy that Johnston believes we have in Canada when we are playing our best are:

- Inclusive rather than exclusive
- Honourable rather than disrespectful
- Selfless rather than self-absorbed
- Smart rather than stupid
- Caring rather than callous

When seen in the light of the grace of Jesus Christ, when understood in the way these qualities of flourishing are embodied by him, these attitudes and behaviours really are the answer to all our discontents, whatever the specific forms they may take in our particular desolation and dreariness

Meaning from the Messiah

God came as Messiah in Jesus – the ‘anointed one’ who would initiate the final realization of all of God’s dreams for the restored garden of delight that he has first created – a peaceable kingdom in which praise filled all relationships with goodness and mercy - that’s why we are so insistent in adding the title ‘Christ’ to ‘Jesus’ – it’s the Greek word for Messiah – so we believe, as Christians, that in our relationship with Jesus Christ that we have become conscious contributors to God’s goodness and mercy by blessing the world with our redeemed presence – God works through us to bring goodness and mercy into this world

For us Christians, to confess that Christ is King, that Jesus is Lord, is to consciously admit that the energy that allows us to be goodness and mercy in this world comes only from our relationship with Jesus Christ – what he did for us through cross, resurrection, and ascension is unimaginable – it is something weirdly and wonderfully divine – *the* gift of grace that excites our gratitude – *the* power of peace that excites our praise

I suspect that Jesus knew that telling the Jews gathered to demand support for their idea of God’s Messiah would not understand by Jesus simply telling – he had to show them in those events of the first Easter season how to turn their mourning into dancing (Ps 30 + Feast of Dedication)– even then, for the most part, they rejected him

Ponder your discontents this morning – what keeps stress in your life (Bruce Cairnie will be talking about that next week)? – how can you let go and let the goodness and mercy of God relieve or replace those discontents in your life? – God’s grace has the power to do that – indeed, God’s grace has already done that in Jesus Christ – but you have to accept the gift, then live into it one act of generosity after another

Dear Canada,

*Each morning, I write two or three letters, often to Canadians whom I've been fortunate to meet. Some are sent to thank them for their service and gestures. Others are written to further develop my thoughts following meaningful conversations. I have collected 50 of these letters into *The Idea of Canada: Letters to a Nation*.*

These letters reflect my preoccupations as Governor-General and as a Canadian. They have allowed me to explore certain fundamental questions, as well as the values, sensibilities, traditions and achievements that make this country unique. They have helped me form my idea of Canada.

We are inclusive. We are 36 million people gathered from every part of the world. We welcome the contributions of all who inhabit this land – from indigenous peoples to the newest arrivals among us.

We are honourable. We desire peace, and we use our military power sparingly, but with conviction when we do so. And wherever and whenever we use that power in defence of what is just, we demonstrate our gratitude to those who stand in harm's way for us.

We are selfless. From the very beginning, our survival has depended upon an understanding of our mutual interdependence. We aspire to live up to this tradition of generosity, certain in our hearts that none but the gift passed from an open hand will multiply.

We are smart. We try to resist complacency and yearn instead for self-improvement. We encourage the love of learning and we cherish our right to it. We understand we are united, prosperous, and free to the extent we ensure that all Canadians have opportunities to learn, excel, advance, and thus to contribute.

We are caring. Our abiding concern for the common good makes us responsive. We stand by our neighbours in times of distress or natural disaster. Inspired by our common bond, we strive to come swiftly and resiliently to the aid of those in need.

My idea of Canada includes all of the above. We are fortunate to live in a country that is in many ways the envy of the world, yet we face many challenges. As Canadians, we must relentlessly aspire to be inclusive, honourable, selfless, smart, and caring at every turn without fail.

That is my idea of Canada. What's yours?

David