

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood, Sept 25, 2016

Notes for the sermon on Invoking Father Abraham



Ps 146 and Luke 16:19-31 – Sermon Text = Luke 16:31

***He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets,
neither will they be convinced
even if someone rises from the dead.”***

[Hymns = 478, 721, & 726 the Canadian Presbyterian *Book of Praise*]

Key Ideas

1. Human beings easily get stuck in ruts – have you ever noticed that about others? – they keep doing irritating things to you, over and over again – and have you ever noticed that about yourself? – you keep doing things that are not particularly helpful or healthy? – our brains get wired into habits and those habits seem well nigh impossible to break – but research over the past 20 years in how our brains work suggest that change is possible, especially if it is positive and beneficial
2. And that brings me to our story this morning – commonly called The Rich Man and Lazarus – often interpreted as a story of greed, indifference and punishment – rich men don't listen to the teachings of the faith about helping the poor, so they suffer everlasting torment – the good guys win and the bad guys lose – just the way it should be - much like the reality depicted in this image from the at the Abbey of St Bertin in northern France, illuminated about 1200 – that's the way our brains are wired to think – divide the world into the good and the bad – then dish out the punishment to those we consider bad
3. But what if we really listened to guy telling the story, to the guy who was raised from the dead, to the guy who enable us to change for the better? – would we see the world differently? – would we work with the Holy Spirit to rewire our brains to pursue forgiveness rather than punishment, to practice love rather than hate, to seek reconciliation rather than retribution? – you can't grow into the life that is offered in Jesus Christ and not change the way your brain is wired – it takes intention and attention – it takes practice – it requires a community of worship, learning, fellowship and service to support you – and it is all worth it – even if it does involve listening to someone who rose from the dead!

At this stage in our ponderings, then ...

When we listen to Jesus, often heard through the voices of generations who have found the meaning of their lives in him, we hear the same voice of God that came to Abraham and Sarah, to Moses and the Israelites, to the prophets and their communities – it is the voice of forgiving love that reconciles the whole creation to the source of its flourishing – and it changes our brains

Sermon notes of Rev Dr Brian Fraser,
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