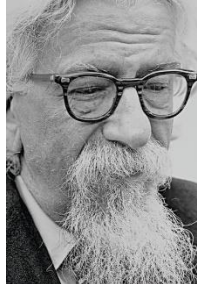
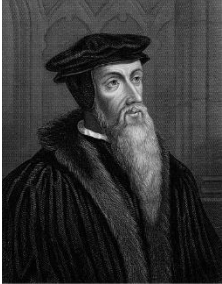


How Does God Nourish Faith?

Sermon Notes for May 21 2017 at Brentwood



Ps 66:8-20 and John 14:15-21

**This is the Spirit of truth,
whom the world cannot receive,
because it neither sees nor knows him.
You know him, because he abides in you,
and he will be in you.
(John 14:17)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- These chapters of John's gospel that we have been pondering since Easter talk a lot about the Holy Spirit – as we all agreed on Friday night at Bible study, it's through the work of the Spirit that God nourishes our faith – John assures the early Christians that the Spirit has been left with them to nourish and instruct them in the things that are essential in following Jesus Christ and participating in his continuing mission of blessing the whole of creation – indeed, the flourishing of our own salvation is found in our participation in that mission
- This key insight also involves the recognition that the Spirit has been active in the church from the very beginning, meaning that there is much to be learned from our foremothers and forefathers in the faith over the centuries – the history of the church is not to be ignored or dismissed, as often happens in newer forms of the church these days, but to be honoured and pondered as an essential source of nourishment in the faith -
- Two figures who have been part of that history have nourished my considerations of this passage from John this week – John Calvin and Joshua Abraham Heschel – Calvin is the seminal thinker for Presbyterians world-wide – for much of his career, he preached every day – scholars are just beginning to translate and study that huge collection of sermons and, in doing so, enriching our understanding of the flow of Calvin's thought as the Spirit used the Scriptures in conversation with the world to nourish and instruct Calvin's soul - Heschel was very ecumenical in his Judaism and deeply involved with Christian leaders like Martin Luther King Jr in the civil rights movement – widely read among Christians seeking to understand the Judaism of Jesus – the insight from Calvin this week regarded the role of the church = mother and teacher – to nourish and instruct us in the love of God seen most clearly in Jesus, the Christ – the insight from Heschel was the affirmation that human beings are most authentic when they are continually curious about their own significance in God's plan for the creation – precious and unique in their contributions to the mission of God

At this point in our ponderings, then ...

Methodist scholar Albert C Outler, drawing on the thinking of John Wesley, spoke of four means the Spirit uses to nourish us in the faith – Scripture, experience, tradition, and reason – it is the workings of all these human faculties and processes in constant conversation with Scripture that the Spirit uses to nourish us in our contributions to God's mission of sanctifying the creation with the beauty of God's blessing – and all of this happens primarily in the Christian community that is the church – in the kinds of curiosity and conversations we encourage here at Brentwood

Notes for a sermon preached by Brian Fraser,
minister with Brentwood Presbyterian Church, Burnaby, BC