

Where is Christ in the World?

Sermon Notes for Sept 10, 2017 at Brentwood

Ps 149 & Matthew 18:15-20



**For where two or three are gathered together
in my name,
I am there among them.
(Matt:18:20)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- This week I went over and had lunch in the food court at Brentwood Mall – Pita King – chicken shawarma wrap – with hot sauce – it’s a bit messy, but oh so delectable – I watched people – I listened to them – I saw progress reports on the development on the big screen on the northside wall – 10 new towers – 8500 new residents – that’s 10x the size of the town in Ontario where I lived during high school! – that’s our neighbourhood, or part of it – then there are the residential homes immediately around us - \$1.5 million + to move into this neighbourhood – the pace has slowed, but still lots of houses selling, fairly quickly – 3 characteristics of our neighbourhood – it’s diverse, it’s affluent, and it’s full of migrants, people moving in from somewhere else – so, where is Jesus Christ in the midst of this confusing urban reality? – and for the many of you who don’t live in this particular neighbourhood, where is Jesus Christ in the midst of your neighbourhood?
- Many of the original hearers of Matthew’s gospel would have been gathered in smaller groups than the one gathered here this morning – probably 2 or 3 or 10 in a home or shop – the most recent research suggests that they were very mixed in social status and ethnicity – many were migrants who had moved to the urban centres of their world for greater opportunities – they had found in their relationship with Jesus Christ and his people a source of meaning and significance that helped to reorient their lives to flourishing after the disorientations they had experienced through the traumas of their lives
- in many ways, Matthew’s gospel is a manual on Christian living for those seeking to grow into a new life in Christ – the five discourses around which his life of Jesus is structured imitates the five books of the Torah – the first five books of what we often call the Old Testament – this is God’s way of living in the friendship originally intended for all of humanity as it played its crucial role in the flourishing of creation – so, Christ’s ongoing presence in the world is, first and foremost, in the community that gathers in his name for worship, learning, fellowship, and service – that’s why sustaining and expanding the impact of this

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congregation is so important – it's Christ's primary way of being in the world – it is in gatherings like this that Christ most directly and powerfully encounters people with his transformative grace

- And because of what happens within us and among us as we gather like this, Christ is borne by us into the world, in every encounter that we have with God's beloved world – the early Christians were often referred to as 'Christ-bearers' - they gathered to be encouraged by God's grace and they dispersed to live God's love in everything they did – they were sustained in that mission of bearing God's redemption in their daily lives by the worship, learning, and fellowship that nourished them when they gathered, then they took that flourishing out into a world that was indifferent or hostile to their way of living for that world – there's a rhythm of life here – it's a rhythm of healing and sharing that healing – of grace and gratitude – of gathering and dispersing – Christ is wherever you are in the world – doing whatever you do for the healing and growth of his beloved creation

At this point in our ponderings, then ...

I've thought a lot this week about our friend, Cindy Johal – she passed from this realm of being far too soon for many of us, her life in this world cut short by the mean mysteries of cancer – one of her great contributions to this church was the way she reminded us of the power of our welcome – of how important hospitality was in this world – in a neighbourhood like ours – it's one of the things that people coming here to play and enjoy music comment on – how warm and welcoming this community is and how important it is to them to find that kind of spiritual space for their endeavours – as we bear Christ in whatever parts of God's beloved world we frequent this week, let's be attentive to offering Christ's hospitality, Christ's healing and growth, to everyone we meet – because, as Jeremiah constantly reminds us, in their welfare we will find our own