

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Jan 27, 2019

Can We Be Saved from Ourselves? – Forgiveness/Earnest Sorrow (Psalm 106)



**Yet you saved them for your name's sake,
so that you might make known your mighty power.
(Psalm 106:8)**

A lesson from Psalm 106

A long psalm to recount a long history – really a continuation of Ps 105 – there, the community remembers what God had done – here, the community remembers how they responded – by rebelling – that's the word and concept emphasized here – recalcitrant rebellion against God's covenant with them – and, as their heirs, us – from fear, impatience, arrogance, and ignorance – all working together to generate complex webs of sinning and being sinned against that are passed on from generation to generation – imprison us – can't imagine being freed – helpless and hopeless – seek to lose ourselves in soul-denying behaviours – dominating control, resigned withdrawal, numbing substance abuse – no, it's pretty clear to anyone who takes an honest look at this dynamic in human history that we cannot save ourselves – our witness, as Christians, is that God can, God wants to, and God has in Jesus Christ – as this wonderful emancipation statue in Barbados shouts, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God we are free at last!" – but the question remains – what are we going to do with that gift of freedom? – vs 3 of Ps 106 nails the answer – act justly and do right – grow into right relationships with God, others, and yourself that are modeled by the Holy Trinity – the energy, light, and joy seen in Laura Zerebeski's painting

Provocative points to ponder – as always, too many to cram into one sermon

- In our Brentwood Declaration, we have highlighted how our ancestors rebelled against God's intent and constraints and, thanks to Winston's input as we were revising the wording, how we continue to do that – here's the crucial truth to remember – it's what Canadian Presbyterians believe to be the core truth of the Gospel – you'll find it concisely expressed in Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian churches – preserved in 2 Cor 5:19-20a:

... in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; ...

- It is God who frees us from the shackles of the past, strong as they may seem to us – indeed, that freedom has already been granted – it is ours to live into – that is what the discipline of the Christian life is all about – living into God’s freedom as God’s people, chosen to bless the world in God’s name – that really means for God’s purposes = right relationships – harmony and balance throughout all creation
- Galatians is commonly seen as Paul’s celebration of the freedom that we have been given in Jesus Christ – the fruits of this freedom, as we have reminded ourselves over and over are these qualities of life together – “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23)

How does this all relate to our witness as a fellowship of the friends of Jesus?

Can you relate to the energy of joy in this statue of emancipation? – the sense of dignity and worth that comes when the chains are broken – the body rising up in gratitude for and anticipation of a new life – there are statues celebrating emancipation throughout the Caribbean – but we have to live consciously in that freedom every moment of our lives – doing justice, being in right relationships – and letting God weave those small acts of obedience to God’s reign into a powerful movement for flourishing throughout the world – so, how will you live into your freedom in Jesus Christ this week? – and how will you pay attention for the kinds of impact the Spirit works through your actions in your circles of influence?

My Notes

My Prayers

