

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Jan 13, 2019

How Do We Flourish in God's Steadfast Love? – Call & Rebellion (Psalm 117)



**For great is God's steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord
endures forever.
Praise the Lord!
(Psalm 117:2)**

A lesson from Psalm 117

This is the shortest book of the Bible – 2 verses among 31,102 – it's so unusual that some scholars have argued that these verses really belong at the end of 116 or at the beginning of 117 – but these two verses stand with a clarity and power that deserves our pondering – because the soul of the way Christians participate in the life of the world – we praise because God loves – we praise because God loves – we praise because God loves – that is the simple and straightforward message of these two verses – and pondering that message, I couldn't help but think of Ira Thomas' image of the 'Communion of the Saints' – endless in number - reconciled with God, with each other, and in themselves – praising in companionship with each other in the glow of God's love – that's the breadth of this short psalm's wisdom

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

- In a community dis-eased by resurgent racism, by a tribalism that seeks to establish security by traumatizing and terrorizing others by labeling them different and dangerous, we need to be reminded constantly, and constantly to remind our neighbours, that there is a source of peace and security much older and more reliable than violence and victimizing – that source, as the psalm says so clearly, is the steadfast love and enduring faithfulness of God – can you sort out the races and tribes in this picture, suffused as it is in the glow of God's love? – neither can I - to become aware of that love, to grow in our appreciation for that love, to become active participants in that love – that is how we flourish as human beings – that is the mission for which we have been given the gift of life
- We flourish by paying attention to the flow of this love – that's one of the reasons I've made some changes for us to test out in the bulletin for Sunday Morning Worship – I am hoping we can make this core truth that we are pondering this morning more apparent – that this is a space that the Trinity uses to make people aware, to help them appreciate, and to energize them for action in gratitude for the steadfast love and enduring faithfulness of their Creator, Redeemer, and Reformer – aware, appreciative, active - that what praise is all about, as we discovered in our earlier conversation, is a full-being expression of gratitude, in everything we do in our relationships with this creation, for the

reconciling and forgiving love of God that encounters us in every fibre of our being in Jesus Christ

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

We've been doing a first draft of the budget for 2019 this week – Session will refine it some more next Sunday, set a time for our annual meeting, and distribute the budget for your prayerful consideration – it's not just about money – it's about how we use that money to praise God's steadfast love – it's about opening up this space for people to be touched in a healing way by God's steadfast love and enduring faithfulness - it's about the vision we have for this space as a place where the Trinity can make people aware of their enduring faithfulness to the communion of saints, where they can nourish people to grow in their appreciation for God's reconciling love in Jesus Christ, where they can form, deform, and reform people to participate more fully and faithfully in God's mission of justice and kindness, with all due humility – in these two short verses, the whole point of the other 31,100 are expressed – I pray the Spirit has worked her wonders with them in your souls this morning

My Notes

My Prayers

