

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Jan 20, 2019

What's Your Dream? – Forgiveness/Earnest Sorrow

(Psalm 88)



**Are your wonders known in darkness,
or your saving help in the land of forgetfulness?
(Psalm 88:12)**

A lesson from Psalm 88

In Dec of 1955, a Baptist preacher from Atlanta became involved in a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama – deep in the darkness of racism in the southern US – what moves me deeply about Joan Baez' portrait of Martin Luther King Jr in her series of paintings called 'Mischiefs Makers' is the sense of his understanding of 'the dark night of the soul' – not just individually, but as a nation, as a race, as a species – where is the God revealed in Jesus Christ in such situations? – absent? – indifferent? – non-existent? – we all have those questions, just as the psalmist's community did – and sometimes we don't get easy answers – we ponder in the midst of the deepest darkness – no hint of light on the horizon, other than a hunch that this should not be happening, given God's wonderful saving powers – particularly struck this week considering this sermon with these words from King's Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1964 – "I refuse to accept the view that [human]kind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."

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

- Another of King's iconic speeches/sermons was 'I have a dream' – 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom – over 250,000 gathered around the Lincoln Memorial – perhaps the most quoted line is "'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!" – the question I was to disturb you with this morning is whether in your lives, in our lives, in our nation, are we keeping that dream alive? – is your dream, our dream, in continuity with King's?
- If we are serious about being the ambassadors of God's reconciling grace that Jesus invites us to be, then we are being fed by the same streams of blessing that led King to his life of activism throughout the 1950s and 1960s, until an assassin's bullet silenced his voice in 1968 – but that voice continues to resonate in communities like this that draw on the same reconciling grace to dream about a world free of racism in our own times

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

There is, in our times, a resurgent of ugly racism – there are, among some who claim to be Christian, attempts to justify that attitude from their gross misreading of our faith – in 1994, when our denomination issued its apology to indigenous peoples in Canada, we confessed to having misrepresented Jesus – that is an important challenge for all of us – are we representing Jesus faithfully to the best of our abilities – and are we constantly seeking to be reformed by the working of the Holy Spirit to understand our relationship with Jesus in deeper and broader dimensions? – I hope people participating here at Brentwood can say opportunities for that nourishment abound in our work and witness – so, how has your dream been formed, deformed, and reformed by your relationship with the Holy Trinity? – does the energy of that relationship continually challenge you to change according to the Gospel of reconciling grace? - and how are you living out that reconciling grace in all the 'starless midnights' of our lives?

My Notes

My Prayers

