

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Jan 6, 2019

What Love Is This? – Epiphany

(Psalm 8)



**Yet you made them little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.**

(Psalm 8)

A lesson from Psalm 8

Have you ever noticed how hard it is to love? – how frail and fumbling we are as we desperately grasp for it? – how often we look for it in the wrong places? – how drained and depressed we get when we don't find it? – how demanding and challenging it is to keep it fresh and flourishing? – how constantly we have to negotiate the relationships in which we are loved and love in grateful response? – this week, as I was pondering Ps 8 at the beginning of a new year and thinking of the light of Epiphany in the birth of Jesus, the Creator's Christ, my attention was drawn not so much to the glory and worth of humanity, but to the God who gifted us with that – and that took me back to Jesus' story of the loving father – to get a fresh feel for that story, listened again to Dan's jazz suite based on that story – provokes within me so many dimensions of the complexities of God's love – not ours, but God's – and that's a good perspective to recall as we begin this new year in the light of that love

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

- It is not until Psalm 8 that the people of Israel, in this compilation of their sacred songs and prayers, stop complaining to God – the first 7 psalms are really laments – this is the first song of praise that arises in gratitude for God's love – a love evident in the glory and honour with which the Creator has crowned humanity – the core dynamic as we are nourished to flourish in this community of love that the Holy Trinity cultivates here at Brentwood, and in every other gathering of Christ's church, is God's reconciling love – a love that does not hold our sins against us, but welcomes us into our original vocation of being ambassadors of God's love for the world – a diplomatic corps for the message of God bringing together again all that has fallen apart in the history of the world – and does this over and over again throughout our earthly life – steadfast, undeterred by our rebellions and resistances, true to this promise of crowning us with glory and honour
- Think again of Jesus' story of the two sons and their father – imagine yourself as one of the old servants almost hidden in the shadows of Rembrandt's painting – you were heart-broken with shock when your young master up and ran off to follow his lusts – you remained true to your other young master as he took on additional responsibilities for the

estate – you watched your old master wither with anxiety, while continuing to work for the well-being of all who depended on the success of the enterprise – then the prodigal re-appears – what’s he after? – how dare he? – yet somewhere deep in your soul is a sense of relief and gratitude – you can identify deeply with the outrage of your young master who stayed – but what kind of insanity is going on with your old master? – what kind of foolishness and scandal is this open, unconditional welcome of the prodigal? – hasn’t this younger master insulted and desecrated everything his father held dear, including himself? – what’s going on here?

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

What’s going on here is the love of God – take a moment to digest further the impressions the Spirit is stirring up within you and among you as you contemplate Rembrandt’s portrayal of this story – and bring the light of those insights to the Lord’s table this morning – listen for, feel, and respond to a love that is infinitely more than we can hope for or imagine – a love that crowns us with the glory and honour of God’s reconciling mercy and grace

My Notes

My Prayers

