

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church

Sun, June 9, 2019 – Pentecost

The Purpose of Pentecost

(Ps 42:1-8, Acts 2:1-21, and 2 Cor 5:16-21)



All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

(2 Cor 5:18-20)

A lesson from Acts 2:2 Cor 5:18-20

The purpose of Pentecost was to shock a group of human beings into the realization that they were ambassadors of the reconciling love of the God who created the entire world – think on that for a moment – feelings had to be mixed among this lot – they weren't all the same ethnicities/tribes – they didn't all speak the same language - they weren't all the same age – they weren't all the same gender – they weren't all the same social status – they hadn't all worked on, argued over, and finally agreed to the same statement of purpose and practices – look around you – they were a lot kind of like us – with all the differences you see around you – and as this lot coalesced into a church, into a corps of ambassadors who use their many and diverse gifts to “share the Good News that God is love,” as we say in our statement of purpose and practices – the statement around which we have crafted our congregational profile (invite further feedback after the service) – the purpose of Pentecost, then, is to take us as we are, with all of our diverse gifts and gaffs, and shock us into realizing that we are a corps of ambassadors for God's reconciling love – in everything we do, in every circle of influence we frequent – and here's a fascinating fact that I just discovered this week preparing this sermon – do you know what the Greek word is for ‘ambassador’ in this passage from Paul's letters to the church in Corinth, where people were demeaning and dismissing people left and right because of their differences and disagreements? – it's *presbeuo* – one of the roots in Greek of Presbyterian – so, in our very name as a branch of Christ's church, we are continuing his ministry of reconciling love as ambassadors of that love – that's what God was up to in that first Pentecost – enlisting, as only God can, a corps of ambassadors, of presbyterians, entrusted with the message that the whole world has been reconciled with its Creator

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

- This is God's work – it's not done to make sense to human beings – in fact, it often shocks us into seeing things differently, seeing things through God's eyes of reconciling love – think of the images that Luke uses to describe this recruitment gathering at Pentecost – the Spirit as flames, flaming doves of peace – burning but not consumed – something like the burning bush that has inspired Presbyterians since their very beginnings – and what was God's assurance to Moses from those flames, to Moses who was being chosen as an ambassador of God's reconciling love – "Fear not, for I am with you!" – with that assurance, Moses went and helped God recruit a whole nation of ambassadors
- This work is done by growing into the gifts of the Spirit – you already have them – they are God's gifts to you – Paul pens a wonderful list of them for the Galatians, as he reminds them what God's reconciling love **frees** them to be and do – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal 5:22-23) – that's the journey we are on together – growing into a maturity in living out those gifts of grace – with each other – supporting each other – modeling this way of living reconciling love for the world
- All of this is already happening here at Kerrisdale – our journey so far has been anything but a straight line to maturity in Christ – but all the elements are there – and we are seeking a new minister to join us and provide the leadership appropriate to their gifts for this corps of ambassadors – pray for our search, ask probing and provocative questions about fit and suitability, provoke one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24) in everything we do here from this time forward – one conversation after another

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

I had the pleasure a few weeks ago of lunching with Joan Porter in her condo – an historian's delight – walls covered with memories – she graced me with a copy of her Dad's final sermon here at Kerrisdale – preached a little over 24 years ago on the day before he died at the age of 97 – it was this congregation's 84th anniversary – the sermon is full of wonderful remembrances – but the focus is on being a 'living church' – for Harry, that meant being 3 (good Presbyterian preacher that he was) core practices in the service of our purpose = a believing church, a worshiping church, and a witnessing church – that's what we are continuing here now – that's what we want a new minister to join us in – that's what will continue to make us faithful ambassadors of God's reconciling love, continuing to respond faithfully to God's pentecostal love

My Notes

My Prayers

