

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Oct 6, 2019 – World Wide Communion Sunday

Poisoning the Mind

(Ps 37:1-9 and Acts 14:1-7)



... Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Gentiles became believers. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against their brothers.

(Acts 14:1b-2)

Insights from the story within the story

I wonder whether we pay as much attention to what goes into our minds as we do to what goes into our bodies? – and do we pay health-generating attention to both? - the range of choice that we have from the variety of sources that are trying to get in there is bewildering, both in ideas and in foods – when I did just that this week, I quickly recalled this image painted by Laura Zerebeski – a provocative melding of Rodin's *The Thinker* and Munch's *The Scream* to convey the horror that can grip us as we become more aware of what's going on in the world, both around us and within us – the phrase that fascinated and provoked me this week from this passage was 'poisoning the mind' – what Luke saw the opponents and persecutors of the early Christians doing to discredit the movement – to nip it in the bud before it really built momentum – seen as a threat to their way of seeing and controlling things – to the protective shield of ideas they had built up around them to protect their way of life in a diaspora where their beliefs and identity were under constant threat – that's why the story of the healing of that poisoned man that Jesus worked in Paul is so powerful – that transition from 'poisoner' to 'ambassador' – one of the impacts this new life-nourishing relationship with Jesus Christ had on Paul is worth noting here is this – he now had what we might call the 'antidote' to the poisoning – a steadfast, enduring embrace by a forgiving and reconciling love that would not abandon him and that counteracted every poison that came his way – that's the work God's Spirit does for us – provides the antidote to the poisoning ideas that humans concoct to dominate, distort, and destroy – but what's the antidote?

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

- The antidote is the belief that God has embraced us, along with the whole world, in a forgiving and reconciling love that cannot be defeated – it is the irresistible energy in the world – that is our core belief as Christians – that is what we testify to when we say, "Jesus is Lord" – the earliest and most basic of Christian

confessions – the story of that all-encompassing love is what we’ve summarized in the Brentwood Declaration – it’s **THE** story in which we participate and to which we contribute – the story of being reconciled to our Creator in Jesus Christ, forgiven and reoriented to become agents and ambassadors of the healing influence of that love in this world – ingesting and living into that story is the antidote to all the poisons that plague us – that the healing and immunity that is ours in Jesus Christ

How does this apply to our mission here at Brentwood?

We are being fed by that healing love this morning at this table – it’s a long table – stretches around the world and part of a mind-blowing maze of tables – every race and class and condition is reconciled at this table to be kin in working with God to sanctify the poisoned life around them – to stand firm in their belief that God has saved the world in Jesus Christ and that the power of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to enable them to participate in and contribute to that salvation – so, come and receive, with deep gratitude, the antidote to whatever is making you scream these days – receive the healing that only God’s forgiving and reconciling love can give

My Notes



My Prayers