

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Dec 8, 2019 – Advent 2 - Peace

Salvation for All Flesh

(Ps 72:1-7 and Luke 3:1-6)



**... and all flesh shall see
the salvation of God.
(Luke 3:6)**

Insights from the story within the story

Two questions kept disturbing me as I pondered this text, in this passage, in Luke's writings, in the Scriptures that teach about what God did in Jesus Christ and continues to do through the Holy Spirit – [do a gentle rant against the misuses of Scripture] – first, what is salvation? – second, why all flesh? – I think there's a lot to provoke our imaginations in understanding what God wants us to know more deeply in Edward Hicks's classic series of 61 paintings called 'The Peaceable Kingdom,' started in 1820 – a Quaker minister, in that tradition of peace churches - his inspiration is from Isaiah, just as Luke draws on that prophet in particular to help make sense of what's going on through Jesus of Nazareth – for Hicks, the Isaiah reference is chapter six and vision of God's peaceable kingdom – future generations in gentle kindness with all flesh, while the current generation of settlers is colonizing the indigenous peoples – a powerful and instructive visualization of what God desires, intends, and is bringing about – our salvation consists of participating in and contributing to the fulfilment of that vision – being who we were created to be

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

- So, what is salvation? – as Frederick Buechner suggests in the quote in our insert, it's essentially being loved by God – by the Energy that created you with a purpose – and that is a given, a gift, a love from which we cannot be separated, no matter how far we wander away from it – through the work of the Holy Spirit, there will always be a wondering that invites us, not coerces us, to awaken to the full grace that is ours as gift – we are being loved into the fullness of God's intention for our contribution to the blessing of all flesh – that's the scope, and I would say the power, of Luke's vision – I think Hicks captured that wonderfully – I hope some inkling of that vision of salvation provokes your imagination this morning

- Further, why all flesh? – here I think the answer is stunningly simple – because God’s it that way – this whole creation was initiated and is sustained by God for God’s delight in peaceful relationships among every configuration of the divine energy of love that is – that’s not airy-fairy new age gobbly gook – that’s good, solid biblical theology – see if this way of framing it makes some sense in the light of God’s revelation in Jesus, the Christ, in whom God took flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth - the basic element in creation is energy – assembled and aligned in a bewildering multitude of ways – humans have a special degree of responsibility for using that energy to bless - and humans have the power to mess seriously with that assembly and alignment – and we have used that power horribly over the generations, with the results accumulating generation after generation – but, as we say in our Brentwood Declaration, God never gives up on God’s original intent of bring all flesh together in peace

How does this apply to our mission here at Brentwood?

God’s desire forms and reforms our mission here at Brentwood – it shapes the ways in which we nurture each other when we gather for worship, learning, and belonging – it sustains us as we go into God’s world to be God’s ambassadors – carrying God’s vision of peace in our flesh to the flesh of others – in an email this week to a regular at Jazz Evensong, I found myself using the phrase ‘our little band of the bearers of kindness’ – I don’t think I’ve ever thought or written that before – but it rings true, doesn’t it? – the welcome, the wonder, the wisdom, and the witness that our times of worship embody are enfleshed as we go forth to live our daily lives as ambassadors of Jesus Christ’s forgiving and reconciling grace – have a great week doing that – and come back next week for more nourishing to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ

My Notes

My Prayers

