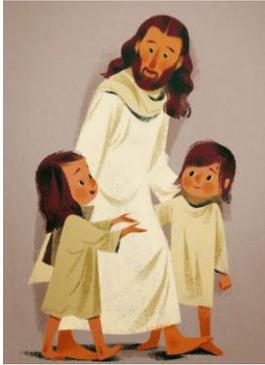


Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Nov 17, 2019

What is this New Teaching?

(Ps 98 and Acts 17:16-34)



From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For, ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’

(Acts 17:26-28)

Insights from the story within the story

Why should anyone these days pay any attention to the claims of the Christian gospel? – think about that for a moment – do you have the words to respond to that question – if one of your kids asks that question at a family meal, what would you say? – just to be transparent, I find that a tough question to answer – and preparing this sermon has both challenged me with it anew and given me some comfort in knowing I’m not the first to ask it (quietly to myself) nor am I alone in asking it – here’s another story from Luke in his account of the Spirit’s spreading of the new teaching about God – the scandalous and foolish teaching that the Creator of the universe took human flesh in Jesus of Nazareth to communicate to his offspring that this God was faithful to his steadfast love for them and all creation – he did not hold their rebellions, or ours, however damaging and destructive, against them, or us – they, and we, were forgiven and brought back into the family – God’s judgements focused on learning how to live together in justice, kindness, and humility – they, and we, were reconciling, not excluding – in all hunches that there is more to life than what we can see and touch, our Creator, the one from whom we spring and in whom we live and move and have our being, is at work reconciling us and bringing us home – that’s the new teaching – and that message is worth finding words for

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

- I can’t give you those words – they have to come from you – from your unique experience of this loving energy of steadfast love and faithfulness in whom you flourish – I can share my story in my words with you, trusting that this God’s Holy Spirit, who gives us our every breath, will use that story and those words to provoke greater confidence and humility in your experiences of trusting this God

– but I cannot do that work of love seeking understanding for you – as with Paul, this new teaching about God’s forgiving and reconciling love for the whole creation, and especially for all his offspring, is poured into and filtered through each of us to bring us all together in a family of blessing – those are my words, at this point in my growth into a deeper understanding of God’s steadfast faithfulness – and I pray they may provoke you to find your words that ring true to your experiences of that faithfulness from your Creator

How does this apply to our mission here at Brentwood?

Here at Brentwood we encounter a lot of people groping for God – consciously or unconsciously – awakening to a hunch or urge that there is something pestering them to see life differently – something provoking them to live life more fully – something promising them a degree of flourishing they are only beginning to imagine – that happens now primarily through our missional musicking – but as the population of this neighbourhood explodes in the next 20 years, it will happen in a much wider variety of ways – and I pray that we will continue in conversations with each other about how to give voice to the hope that is within us, as that verse that invites us into our memorizing and pondering each week says – we find that voice by practicing it – by using it – by learning from our fumblings and mumblings and doing it differently next time – it is my sincere prayer that you find this a safe and stimulating community in which to continue on that journey of honing your voices as ambassadors of God’s steadfast love and faithfulness in bringing us all back home and into the family’s business of blessing

My Notes

My Prayers

