

# Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Jan, 2020

## Encouraging the Believers

(Ps 29 and Acts 20:1-6)



**After the uproar had ceased,  
Paul sent for the disciples;  
and after encouraging them and saying farewell, he  
left for Macedonia.  
(Acts 20:1-6)**

### Insights from the story within the story

“Words build worlds” – I ran across that line this week in an article by a student of leadership named Michael Gold – a jazz musician with a PhD in performance who uses jazz to illuminate the dynamics of organizations and leadership – one of my virtual mentors in creating Jazzthink – my version of his line is this – “Conversations generate cultures” – but it’s the same dynamic – and many sages in the field find jazz an organic, relational, uplifting model for the encouragement that is needed these days to be an organization that stays for true and flexible to its purpose in dramatically unstable and uncertain conditions – that’s certainly the situation in which Paul and his many colleagues found themselves in the period covered by Acts – in spite of us having misrepresented Paul, and Peter, and even Jesus, as cult personalities, with no attention paid to the communities that formed and reformed each other through their conversations, the text of Scripture keeps bringing us back to the reality of people being nourished to flourish in the give and take of real communities in real times and in real places – amidst uproars, and indifference, and conflicts, and personality cults – encouragement in the teachings of the apostles was a crucial conversation in the growth and spread of the early church – and that same dynamic remains at work today, thanks to the continuing illumination of the same Holy Spirit that was at work then.

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

- To reiterate a key point in all of this – the words we use in our conversations generate and create cultures, ways of participating in the relationships that make up our lives – and to emphasize another dimension of that dynamic, all of life is relational – at the heart of the Gospel is a forgiving and reconciled relationship with our Creator, who sent his Son to save the world, and continues to work on that through the Spirit sent to complete that salvation

- Let's pick up on that last aspect of the power of words in conversations – there are a lot of 'sent' words there – and its one of the main threads of Christian thinking about the Trinity – God sends the Son who sends the Spirit – we're sent with a purpose – to be ambassadors of the salvation being generated/created by the Word/Relationship made flesh in Jesus Christ – these few verses in Acts are Luke capturing just some of the conversations that encourage those who are sent to build the church
- And I think it's also important to realize that this new community, this new people of God, is not built around a bunch of beliefs but around a relationship with Jesus Christ, God incarnate and victorious over every kind of death imaginable – this is a relationship that brings hope into our lives and keeps it growing there – at times we are aware of that grace and at times not – but it is always there – I suspect Paul may have made that a key point in his encouragement – no matter how bad things seem, God is with us and for us in bringing in the kin(g)dom – be of good hope, therefore – be just, and kind, and humble – now, I've got work to do, so I'm off – keep in touch

### **How does this apply to our mission here at Brentwood?**

I hope you've noticed one of the threads running through this sermon – belief is not about ideas held by individuals – it is about relationships that shape this creation – it's the quality of trust in relationships that is primary – Paul is encouraging his friends in Christ to trust God in Christ through the work of the Spirit – and when you consider what I'm coming to call these days the 9 Teachings of the Apostles in Galatians 5:21-22a, they are all about qualities of relationships and how we compose them in our circles of influence – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-composure – the last teaching integrates all the others – its an urgent invitation to compose our lives around all those qualities of relationship – with God, with others, and with ourselves – I've composed a little walking song to encourage me to remember these qualities and to enable me to recentre myself in them – [sing the song] – we'll test it out as a part of our worship for the next few weeks and see how it works for you – IK pray it will be encouraging in the midst of the uproars of our time and place

### **My Notes**



### **My Prayers**