

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Feb 23, 2020

Cheerful Witness

(Ps 99 and Acts 24:10-23)



**When the governor motioned for him to speak,
Paul replied, “I cheerfully make my defense,
knowing that for many years
you have been a judge over this nation.”
(Acts 24:10)**

Insights from the story within the story

It's an odd word that Luke uses here to describe Paul's response before this Roman judge – “cheerfully” – the Greek word comes from the same root as the word Luke uses to describe the joy of the father when the prodigal returns – it is the joy of forgiveness, of reconciliation, of gift offered, of steadfast love bestowed – it is same root that gives rise to one of the ways we talk about the Lord's Supper – Eucharist – so, it's full of joyful gratitude and confidence generated by God's love – that's what filled Paul's soul in the most threatening situations he faced, like this trial – not once, but over and over again – rather than react out of fear and anger, he replied with cheerful confidence – here's how I see the world and the mission Jesus entrusted to me

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

- It's tough to face the world with this kind of joyful confidence – in many ways, it's as tough, if not tougher, to preach this message to those who are caught up in the complex dynamics of injustice, malice, and arrogance – the opposites of the gospel invitation to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8) – perhaps that's the way to preach it, to talk about it, to witness to it – as invitation – we defend the gospel, propagate it, witness to it best when we invite people to enjoy the cheerfulness that God's love generates among us – and to remind ourselves and others that this love will never abandon us, no matter what is happening within and around us – nothing, as Paul assures the Christian communities in Rome, can separate us God's love – nothing that happens to us, nothing that we do – God's promise to love the world into a new phase of its evolution is firm, steadfast, unshakeable by anything humans can do – and, in Jesus Christ, it has begun its final phase of fulfillment – that deep trust is what enables Paul to be so cheerful in his witness – and it's available to us as well

How does this apply to our mission here at Brentwood?

Consider, for a moment, the things happening in your lives that generate fear, anger, depression, confusion, giving up on life and its possibilities – they can become overwhelming – unless - unless we hear, consider, and ultimately accept the welcoming invitation to come home to the loving family of the Trinity – that divine community in which we are reconciled into the dance of delight that is God’s intent for the whole creation – the reality of that is what we witness to in and through the church – listen for that witness in our Music for Reflection – listen for that witness as we say again this morning, in response to the Word of God revealed in the stories of the Scriptures, our Brentwood Declaration – may the divine love flowing cheerfully through that music and those words make you more confident in your witness as you live through this coming week

My Notes

My Prayers

