

Brian's Sermon with Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sunday, June 14, 2020

Whose Church Is It?

(Psalm 100 and 1 Corinthians 1:10-17)



Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,
by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that all of you be in agreement
and that there be no divisions among you,
but that you be united
in the same mind and the same purpose.
(1 Cor 1:10)

Word to Ponder = Church

Congregational Wisdom =

Paul is pretty direct and blunt about the answer to this question.

The church is Jesus Christ's.
by his unique form of power and authority,
it was born on that first Pentecost
to be an extension of the people God chooses
to be ambassadors/agents/envoys
of God's mind and purpose.

All of this is in the service of God's care for God's creation,
this beloved of so much life that delights its Creator.

We are a special part of the creation,
participants in and contributors to its flourishing.

At least, that was God's purpose for us.

That was the original intent God had
in creating humanity in God's image,
as a community dancing together in delight,
a family around the kitchen table
being nourished to care for the estate.

As John Oxenham wrote in a verse of our second hymn this morning
that we will not sing today,
“one great fellowship of love through the whole wide earth.”
And that fellowship or family is in Christ, of Christ, and for Christ.
Paul’s imagery, that we will explore more deeply later in this series,
talks about church as the Body of Christ, being in Christ.

So, if we accept God’s invitation
to participate in and contribute to
this community of all races in all places,
then we acknowledge that it is not ours,
however we would like to define and confine it,
but it is Jesus Christ’s,
guided by his mind for his purpose.

We’ll explore that mind further next week,
as we observe our national Indigenous Peoples’ Day,
but this morning I want to reflect briefly
on Paul’s understanding of the purpose of God
around which he urges the church
to find its unity.

The purpose, as Paul puts it so powerfully,
is to reconcile the world
to its original design of relationships
that would bless everything
with a flourishing flow of God’s loving energy.
That’s what was, is, and always will be
in the mind of God as the prime purpose of God.

It’s no surprise that the church in an urban setting like Corinth
early and easily had divided into factions
based on the personalities and perspectives of leaders.
In our rebellions against Christ’s mind and purpose,
we place ourselves in positions of certainty and control.
We divide the world into them and us,
with us, of course, being right.
And when that goes on unchallenged for generations,
we end up with the kind of self-righteous polarizations
that are threatening the flourishing of this world.

It’s been a tough week to watch the news.
It’s been a tough week to listen to the cries for justice.
It’s been a tough week to hear the voices of kindness.
It’s been a tough week to find humility.

But it has been there, by God's grace for God's grace.

In those keeping the peace among the protesters.
In those continuing to care in the midst of the pandemic.
In those seeking good books to teach their kids about racism.
In those composing statements for and from churches
on Christ's mind and purpose.

Will find our unity – not uniformity –
in such expressions of faith, hope, and love.

My Notes

My Prayers



Prayers of the People

[spoken or written into the service]