

Brian's Sermon Text for Sunday Worshiping at Brentwood

Sunday, Sept 13, 2020

Serving the Common Good (Psalm 114 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

**To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit
for the common good.
(1 Cor 12:7)**



Word to Ponder = Serving

Congregational Wisdom = giving & receiving, communion & community, offering oneself, sharing, surrendering up oneself, others before yourself, love, an act of service, loyalty, using gifts to the fullest, when we give we receive, joyful helping & supporting

I found myself overwhelmed this morning.

Standing on our balcony over in Lynn Valley,
seeing and smelling the smoke from the wild fires
that are destroying and displacing so much,
I was enveloped by this sense of hopelessness.

What got me into a different soul space
were promptings, provocations of the Spirit
to remember and reformulate.

Remember what Janet Boadu said
when we spoke with each other after Emmanuel's death.
"Well, it's in God's hands."

That attitude doesn't take away the pains of parting and readjustment,
but it reminds us of what we can and cannot control.

Remember how Paul engaged with his contentious colleagues
in the church in Corinth
when he came up with the brilliant metaphor of the body
to help them (and us) understand more clearly
the nature of the interdependencies
we have been blessed with in Jesus,
the Christ or Messiah in whom God chose
to forgive and reconcile the whole world.

God freed us from the hopeless tangles of our traumas
and enabled us to serve the common good with a new resilience
as the body, the continuing presence, of Jesus Christ in this world.

That is an awesome privilege and responsibility,
especially in the face of the destruction and displacement
that plagues this world today.

The fires raging through forests dried out by climate change;
yet more explosions and devastations in Beirut;
ongoing migrations around the world
as violence, drought, and storms continue;
peaceful protests seeking authentic personhood for all
marred and discredited (among some) by looting;
and all of this in the midst of a pandemic
that is being disastrously mishandled by many.

No wonder we get overwhelmed at times by hopelessness.

I also remembered this week
the words of Fred Rogers mother
when he asked her where to find hope in the midst of disasters.
“Look for the helpers,” she said. “Look for the helpers.”
Look for those who serve life,
no matter how the energies of death are raging around us.
Be the body of Christ, the hands and feet of God,
in caring for our creation,
the creation God wants to share with all of us.

Unless we really appreciate and appropriate
Paul’s wisdom in this passage,
that privilege and responsibility can seem overwhelming,
something we have no way of realizing.

But if we are infused with Paul’s vision here,
of being different parts of one body
all working together
to bless our creation,
then we find confidence to live into the service God desires,
doing justice, loving kindness, and serving humbly.

We are not alone in this,
First and foremost, we are with God.
Further, we are with every human being God has created,
whether they identify with our faith or not.
That breadth of connection comes from God’s love for all creation.
It is not our prerogative to question it or set up barriers against it.
We do, but that is part of our rebellion against God’s desires.

So, with that kind of remembrance and reformulation,
my hope was rekindled.
I was strengthened in my resilience for serving the common good
in whatever ways God offers me in this coming week.
I’m convinced the same thing is happening within you
and among us as together, with our different gifts and possibilities,
we go into God’s world to be Christ’s body.

My Notes



My Prayers

Prayers of the People

Assure us that you have heard these prayers
spoken aloud into this worshipping
or quietly in our souls.

And hear these common prayers this morning:
for all those dispossessed and displaced by disasters;
for the helpers, individually and institutionally,
that support the rebuilding of their flourishing;
for those who grieve, however long ago the parting happened;
for communities of worship as they adjust to a longer pandemic;
for families working through tensions and conflicts;
for the possibilities the paving of our parking lot will open to us;
for all who serve your justice, kindness, and humility
in ways that generate blessing.

And help us hear again the comfort and challenge of your prayer:

[singing of the Lord's Prayer]