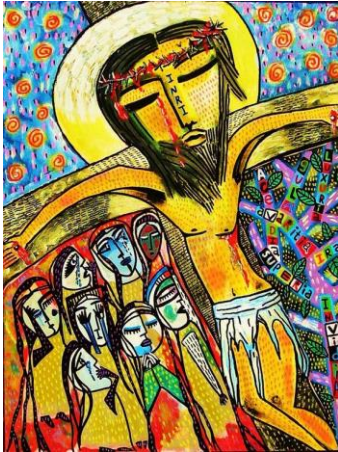


Brian's Sermon Text for Sunday Worshiping at Brentwood

Sunday, Oct 11, 2020
Thanksgiving Sunday

Whose Decency and Whose Order? (Psalm 23 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-40)



... but all things should be done
decently and in order.
(1 Cor 14:40)

Word to Ponder = Order

Congregational Wisdom = respectful attention process, opposite of chaos, planned and organized, respect for each other, cleanliness, alignment, avoid conflict, organized, give direction, neat & tidy, accept and carry out roles as assigned by God, godliness, sense of security

Before we get into the meat of the meaning
I will suggest emerges from this text,
I want to comment on the first section of the reading
about women keeping silent in church.
You can tell from who read the passage that I disagree with Paul on this.
The whole denomination of which we are a part,
The Presbyterian Church in Canada,
disagrees with Paul on this.
Paul actually disagrees with himself on this in other conversations
we have recorded in his letters.
And of crucial importance, Jesus did not agree with this
as he engaged in his earthly ministry.

Those who were with him as he died and who saw him first when he rose
were women.

They were the first to be entrusted as ambassadors
of the message that God's forgiving and reconciling love had triumphed.

Granted, it took a long time for the Spirit
to overcome the gender biases that infected the church.
Those biases are still present in many branches of the church.
Our understanding in this denomination was not reformulated until 1966.

But how, thankfully, it is.
Women have full voice in determining
what is decent and orderly for the missioning of this church.

The dialogical discernment by which our denomination
came to this reformulation of its faith
under the continuing illumination of the Holy Spirit
was long and complex, and therefore thorough.
Explaining that, and the approach to the Scriptures that informed it,
is not our focus this morning,
but I will address it further as we read on in the Corinthians letters.

Our focus this morning is on gratitude and thanksgiving.
But the text draws our attention
to something we often ignore
as we celebrate the fruits of all creation in this harvest season.
It's the decent order God has established
to provide all that this earth has to offer to all who inhabit it.
I didn't choose Fred Pratt Green's wonderful hymn this morning,
'For the fruits of all creation,' (#802, *BofP*)
but here are the final words of the final verse to ponder:

*... for the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all, that love has found us,
thanks be to God.*

For generations we were confounded,
and far too many still are,
by the equality of women with men
that God intended as creation evolved.

Jill and I watched the CNN documentary
on Ruth Bader Ginsberg last night.
That equality lay at the heart of her prophetic life.
She spoke, I am convinced, for God's decent order.

So, how do we discern and participate in God's decent order?
If Paul, with his admitted partial knowledge, got it wrong
in this part of his conversations with the early churches,
how did he and we sort it out
and allow ourselves to be formed and reformed
by the love that has found us?

That's really what it's all about, isn't it?
Allowing ourselves, as a community and as persons,
to be reformed continuously by God's love,
by the presence of that love in Jesus Christ,
by the disruptions caused by that love in the acts of the Spirit.

And we do that in conversations with the Trinity and with each other
where God orders God's decency among us
and communicates that decency through us,
feeble and frail as we may be as ambassadors
of the Trinity's forgiving and reconciling love.
We are effective because we are informed by God,
enabled to act as channels of God's decency and order.

This year in particular,
as we are being forced to imagine new ways of hearing each other,
when many of the familiar things are disrupted
and we are venturing forth in faith to innovate in connecting and caring,
I give thanks for all the voices that the Spirit has drawn
into this fellowship of the friends of Jesus here at Brentwood.
I look forward to the astounding and confounding
that lies ahead as we make sense together
of the love that has found us in Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

Deep gratitude to all of you for your presences.

My Notes



My Prayers

Prayers of the People

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

And hear these common prayers this morning:
thank you for the breath and bounty that give us life;
resilient strength for all those passing through the pains of living;
wise discernment in making our political choices;
gratitude for the family and friends with whom we can gather safely;
[two or three phrases that arise from prayers offered by the people]

And help us hear again the comfort and challenge, the gift and risk,
of your prayer that has inspired your people for generations:

[singing of the Lord's Prayer]