

Who Does God Love?

**Ps 146 & Romans 9:19-29 – Sermon Text = Romans 9:25-26
574,727, 747, 746**

*As indeed he says in Hosea,
“Those who are not my people I will call ‘my people,’
and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’
And in the very place where it was said of them,
‘You are not my people,’
there they shall be called
children of the living God.”
(Romans 9:25-26)*

I had moments of deep regret this week
that we are as connected and communicating a world as we are.
I would have been much more comfortable
without that graphic image of the dead child on the beach.
I would have been much more comfortable
without the depressing statistics on the failure to welcome refugees
around the world.
I would have been much more comfortable
without the range of bigoted expressions of self-interest
that flowed across the various screens in my life.

There was a lot of encouragement as well.
I keep saying to people in all walks of my life,
“Look for the signs of God’s justice, peace, and beauty
in the world to which we have been sent in mission.”
Hard though it was for me this week,
and I suspect that was true for you as well,
I was encouraged by the soul-stirring response of ordinary people
imagining all sorts of ways of providing safe spaces
for these refugees to rediscover the joys of life and love.

Because that’s really what God wants in these kinds of situations,
“Make my space, this earth I have entrusted to you,
safe for all peoples to enjoy life and love.”

That’s a tall order.
Lots of the people God had chosen in Biblical times refused to follow that order.
God gave them the law, sent them prophets,
came in the flesh in Jesus of Nazareth,

but they did not see, they did not hear,
they did not respond positively to that order.

Instead, they divided the world into them and us,
the good guys and the bad guys,
the chosen and the rejected,
the loved and the despised,
all to assure themselves that they were in the right,
all to justify that they had to destroy their enemies.

And so the old ways of being human in the world,
the old patterns of fear leading to hatred leading to violence,
endured and extended their influence.

The new order has begun.
That's what Paul believed, anyway.
We've been immersed in that conviction all year
as we have listened to and pondered on his writings.
In the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus,
the promises of the prophets,
reiterating the promises of God in the earliest versions of the covenant,
came to pass and were fulfilled.
God acted decisively in human history,
in his beloved earthly creation,
to guarantee for us a life of justice, peace, and beauty.

The problem is that this new order looks wimpy
in the face of the old order.
We cling in fear to the old order of
divide and conquer,
rejection and superiority,
dismiss and dominate.

The new order reminds us that God does not work
according to our biases and bigotries.
Through the prophet Hosea, Paul reminds his readers,
God said that those who were rejected as foreigners, as strangers,
"shall be called children of the living God."

That's a pretty clear affirmation that God's loves the whole of his creation,
and particularly all human beings created in the image of the Holy Trinity,
created for safe spaces to enjoy life and love.

Our mission, then, as family, as friends, as followers of this God of the Gospel,
is to do everything within the powers that God has given us
to create safe spaces for all God's people to enjoy life and love.

That's what we are being nourished for
at the table around which we gather this morning.

The original gathering was somewhat restricted –
13 Jewish males.

But one of those Jewish males was in the process
of changing the way the world was seen and worked.

In Jesus Christ, all heaven was breaking loose.

Women were already part of his inner circle.

Paul would be transformed by his encounter with the risen Christ
to take God's Gospel to the Gentiles,
all those who were not Jewish.

And the church that grew out of Paul's witness
has taken this good news of freedom and prosperity around the world,
into every nook and cranny where the old order of fear, hatred and violence still ruled,
threatening God's justice, peace, and beauty.

Sadly, far too often, the church herself was lured into that old order
and used fear, hatred, and violence to spread its influence.

But the covenantal promise to Abraham and Sarah – blessing to all people;
the prophetic call to God's people – include all human beings;
and the redemptive works of Jesus – feed all people;
these seeds of the Reign of God never disappeared.

Look at the roots of those gathering at this table this morning:

Hong Kong Chinese, mainland Chinese,

Jamaican, Trinidadian, Korean,

Polish, German, Scottish,

Sri Lankan, Liberian, English,

Ghanaian, Indonesian, and Canadian.

All of us reflect the wide reach of the Gospel
and its power to bring people together in an new order of life and love.

We reflect the wide range of who God loves.

That's what we celebrate at this table.

That's what we are nourished for at this table.

That's what we go forth into the world to share from this table.

Come together with joy to this table.

God the Father has insured that all is ready.

Jesus the Son invites all who God loves to join him.

The Spirit makes all of this family meal work in us and for us.

