

Brian's Sermon Text at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, May 17, 2020

Living into God's Kingdom

(Ps 66 and Acts 28:23-31)



**From morning until evening
he explained the matter to them,
testifying to the kingdom of God
and trying to convince them about Jesus
both from the law of Moses and the prophets.
(Acts 28:23b)**

Word to Ponder = Kingdom of God

Congregational Wisdom = a new creation when we enter into it, grace, united, within, building a better place, renewing creation into His image, a just and peaceful world, community

The final scene in Luke's account of the Acts of the Holy Spirit
in and through the early church
is fascinating.

For two years, he was in dialogue with people,
with a lot of people,
about the new way of living together in the world
the Creator had finally revealed by coming in the flesh.
This was about the salvation offered by the Creator
for the whole of that creation.
And the crux, the fulcrum, the pivot point in those savings acts
was the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the story Paul told,
day after day,
every chance he got to whoever would listen.
It's interesting the way Luke describes the responses -
not hugely concerned about numbers,
honest about disagreements and rejections,
intrigued by how vigorous the conversations became.

This was a church being formed
through dialogue as it discerned the meaning God's salvation had
for their participation in and contribution to
the flow of the energy of God's love in this world.
That's why I chose this morning's image.
It conveys to me the energizing feel
of new possibilities,
moving from the dark to the light,
from the blues to the passions.
That, I think, is what Paul was opening up
for his companions in their conversations.

I was particularly fascinated this week
while pondering this passage
by the variety of responses Luke describes.
As we testify to the kingdom of God
in our circles of inspiration and influence,
varied as they are,
it is good not to get overly anxious
about the results of our conversations.
Some who came to hear Paul were convinced,
others refused to believe,
still others went off to argue vigorously among themselves,
some disagreed openly right there with Paul.
That's not a bad description of the kinds of conversations
we get into about our faith in our city.

But maybe we aren't aware of being in those conversations.
Maybe we're not as confident as we think we should be
in initiating or pursuing them.
Maybe we've become discouraged
Because most people ignore us or reject our message.
Maybe we think we can never be as bold and unhindered
as Paul was in his circles in his day.

I've had all of those feelings as well.

And when I've taken time to ponder
what's really going on there,
the Spirit has always generated
encouraging and empowering insights.

First and foremost, the Spirit has reminded me,
"This is my work. All I'm offering is the opportunity to participate.
Don't worry about successes. Just walk humbly and faithfully with me."

Secondly, the Spirit has reminded me,
“We’re not in this alone. You don’t have to do everything with everybody.
We got billions of companions around the world.
Let’s just focus on the circles of inspiration and influence
I’ve put you in now and see how they can be deepened and broadened.”

Thirdly, and finally, the Spirit has reminded me,
“I’ve been pretty clear about the direction we are travelling together.
It’s towards the completion of God’s kingdom
through more love for God, for others, and for yourself.
You know, that forgiving and reconciling love God embodied in Jesus.
Compose your life in alignment with that summary of the law of the prophets
and go with that flow.”

With those reminders this week as I pondered this passage,
I do feel more bold and less hindered
as I live with you into the Kingdom of God.

I pray the same is true for you.

My Notes



My Prayers

This morning's Prayers of the People

We pray for all those struggling, in whatever ways,
with the adjustments this pandemic is forcing upon them.

We pray that you will be with them in those struggles,
reminding them of the blessings you offer,
the boldness you generate for being blessings in our world,
the ways you remove hindrances to showing your love,
the healing that you desire to bring to your whole world.

We pray this little church of ours,
that we may imagine and implement
ways of supporting each other
in our lives.

We pray that we find in that support encouragement and empowerment
to testify to your kingdom
in every conversation we have.

Fill those conversations with your compassion,
with your curiosity, and with your conviction
so that we may collaborate with everyone
in contributing to the well-being of your creation.

[we sing Darryl Nixon's arrangement of *The Lord's Prayer*]