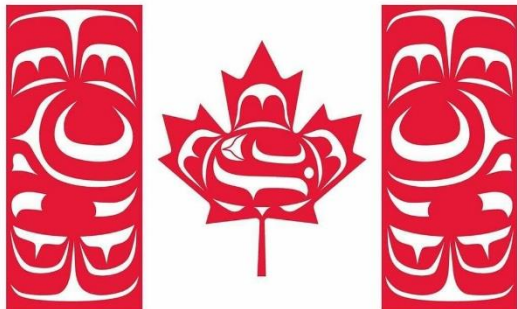


Brian's Sermon Text at Collaborating Churches Worship

Sunday, June 28, 2020

Who Builds the Church?

(Psalm 13 and 1 Corinthians 3:1-23)



For we are God's servants, working together;
you are God's field, God's building.
(1 Cor 3:9)

Word to Ponder = Build

Congregational Wisdom = Christ the builder, labour in mission, build my muscles, build your faith, proactive energy, thy will be done, strength in working together, enhance, uplift and encourage, create worship, learning, fellowship & service

Let's remind ourselves what's going on in these conversations that Paul is having with his friends in Christ in Corinth.

He is hearing from and writing to people he knows well.

He has spent a lot of time, for Paul, with them.

Together, they have been doing something really hard.

They have been composing a new way of living together.

It's a way taught by, modeled by, revealed by
the way the Creator took flesh and dwelt among us
in Jesus of Nazareth.

That way of living together is being shaped by a profound simplicity –
love God, love others, and love yourselves.

That, proclaimed Jesus, is a good summary of all the law and the prophets.

That is the true wisdom for flourishing as human beings.

That God of love, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth,
and still working wonders of forgiveness and reconciliation through the Spirit,
is the source of living together well as kin and friends.

As I read through, read ahead, in these letters,
a profound truth is emerging for me
in ways I had not yet awakened to.
I could identify afresh with Paul's insight
that many of us still have much to learn
about the wisdom of the will of God.

In the midst of the city of Corinth
with its fierce competitions
for loyalty to different sources and shapes of meaning for people,
for trust in different social constructions of how to live well together,
Paul keeps drawing the attention of his hearers
and those reading to them in their house and shop meetings
back to the ongoing work of Christ
to reconcile the world to its Creator.
In that reconciliation is forgiveness to free them up
to be blessings to the whole of creation as care-givers.

The building of this new community, a prototype for a new world,
is being done by God.
Paul's plea is to see that through all the controversies and competitions,
both in the city and within the church.
As God's servants/friends/kin, we work together with the Creator
in building a new way of being together in community,
a way of justice, kindness, and humility.

To the degree that we can discern intention from written documents,
that intention of composing a new way of being together
filled the souls of settlers who came to what is now Canada
over many generations.
Aspirations for a better life for themselves, and especially for future generations,
filled their souls.
Many understood themselves to be followers of Jesus.

But, as we confessed to God and our Indigenous kin in 1994,
we misrepresented Jesus.
The new community that we built deprived Indigenous peoples of the land
and demeaned their ways of living to the point of destruction.
That is not the way of living together that God intends.
There is no justice, no kindness, no humility
in building that kind of community.
Accepting forgiveness and building reconciliation in Christ
is the work in which the Creator is inviting us to co-mission.
That is the energy that guided and enabled Paul
to use all of his considerable talents to persuade the Christians in Corinth
to change their fractious ways and come together in Jesus Christ.

Paul longed for them to come together around one person – Jesus Christ.
And coming together like that would generate the humility to seek justice with kindness.
That is what Christ is building in the world through his church.

It is Christ who builds.
We are servants, co-workers, co-missioners.
And we must be constantly reflecting on our practice of service
through the church that Christ is building.
Are our conversations, like Paul's, constantly and consistently
pointing to the purpose of the church in the wisdom of God's will?
That purpose, to reiterate, is to compose ways of living together
with the whole of creation
that are just, kind, and humble.

My Notes



My Prayers

Prayers of the People

[spoken or written into the service]

As we examine our ways of composing our life together
in this land many call Canada,
especially over this Canada Day holiday,
draw our reflections into conversation with your will and your ways.

As an alternative to our arrogant assertions
that we know the dynamics of good and evil on our own,
you provoke us to be humble and teachable.

As an alternative to our callous selfishness
that treats others as tools of our satisfaction,
you provoke us to be kind and caring.

As an alternative to our cruel tyrannies
that deny your rights to your vision of flourishing,
you provoke us to the justice of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In addition to drawing our attention to those possibilities,
we pray this morning for all those who suffer
in the midst of this pandemic and the upheavals that flow from it,
in the midst of the protests and the tensions that flow from them,
in the midst of the partisan bitterness and the confusions that flow from them.

Awaken us anew to the profound simplicity
of your summary of all your law and prophets –
love you, love others, and love ourselves.

And inspire us to hear afresh that profundity
as we sing your prayer: