

Brian's Sermon Text for Sunday Worshiping at Brentwood

Sunday, August 2, 2020
Celebrating Holy Communion

Empty Idols

(Psalm 17:1-7 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13)



Yet for us there is one God, the Father,
from whom are all things
and for whom we exist,
and one Lord, Jesus Christ,
through whom are all things
and through whom we exist.
(1 Cor 8:6)

Word to Ponder = Idol

Congregational Wisdom = opposite of God's will, false hope, what we really live for and worship, a physical image, modern idols are money and ego, rely on the wrong things, comes between us and God, idolize our egos, religion, misplaced trust, good works

Here's a question to ponder as we continue our conversation this morning.

What is the most defining relationship in your life?

That's the core question Paul is posing to the Corinthians throughout their conversations that got summarized in these letters.

They had lots of answers.

Some were spoken.

Some were so assumed that they just got lived.

And those answers had led to serious divisions in the community.

Some considered the defining relationship to be with their local leader –
Paul, Apollos, and Cephas.

Even Christ has been reduced to a local leader!

Others considered it to be with the imperial cult
that designated the Emperor as the defining relationship in life.
Obey the army-backed god who rules us.

Another group considered it to be the rules and rituals of religion.
Observing these requirements rightly
was seen as the way of satisfying God's demands
and maintaining a relationship with him.

Yet another group considered it to be their personal pleasure.
That pleasure came from wealth, privilege, or sex,
but it was the defining relationship in their lives.

There is something strangely modern
about these defining relationships.
It's about me, my material well-being, and my manipulations.

Paul introduces a different way of seeing things
into this conversation.
It's not a new way of considering things.
It's actually as ancient as creation itself.
But it does set everything
that is disrupting the Corinthian church
into a radical context,
in the sense of going back to the roots.

What Paul is suggesting is that the defining relationship in our lives
is with the Creator of all that exists
and with the embodied Christ
who has been with that Creator from the beginning.
Now, I don't really understand how all that works.
I suspect you don't, either.
But something deep within me,
interconnected in marvellous ways with all that exists,
resonates with this grace and truth.

The defining relationship that nourishes me to flourish best,
that invites me and us to grow into our full potential,
is the one we have with our Creator and the Creator's Christ.
They, along with the Spirit that animates their intent,
have been a caring presence since the beginning of time.

Deciding to let that reality and relationship define your life
puts everything else in a new perspective.
It doesn't eliminate the relationships
that you have with yourself, with the material world,
with your power to manipulate things.
But it does reveal the purpose for which
God put you into those relationships,
assigned you to those responsibilities.

That's what Paul is suggesting, with compassion, for consideration.

He's not demeaning and dismissing
those who still see the other relationships in question here
as the defining relationships in their lives.
He is saying those idols are empty of the life-giving power
These people attribute to them.

The only place you find good nourishment
is in relationship with the Creator of all that exists
who has reached out with forgiving and reconciling love
in Jesus of Nazareth, the Creator's Christ child,
who has been with the Creator from the very beginning.
And they will continue to work their original intent
through the inspiration and influence of their Holy Spirit.

This is the knowledge of the nature of reality
Paul wants to nourish through dialogical discernment
among God's beloved in Corinth,
not just in the church but in whole city.
That's what God continues to cultivate through Brentwood
in all of our e-neighbourhoods.

We gather at God's family table again this morning
for just such nourishment and cultivating.
Simple, ordinary food is provided – bread and wine.

But by the mysterious workings of our Creator,
those elements become for us
a way of being incorporated into God's work in Jesus Christ.

As we do this in remembrance of him,
of his summary of all the law and the prophets
in a life lived loving God, loving others, and loving himself,
we are invited yet again
to commit ourselves more deeply
to this as the defining relationship in our lives.

Come, let us feast together at our Creator's table.

My Notes

My Prayers

