

**Brian's Sermon Text for Sunday Worshiping at Brentwood
Sunday, August 16, 2020**

God is Faithful
(Psalm 115 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-15)



**God is faithful, he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so you may be able to endure it.
(1 Cor 10:13b)**

Word to Ponder = Faithful

Congregational Wisdom = true to self and God, expectant hope, total prosperity on every level, reliable, ongoing, enduring love, following, community is not tested beyond its limits, trust, keep/stay steadfast, trust in spite of discomfort, of faith, with faith, in fullness of trust in God's faithfulness

Nothing in the Christian approach to life makes sense without some feel for the truth in the title of this sermon.

If we don't have a hunch, an inkling, an intuition, that there is a loving energy that created and cares for us, then nothing else in this community that traces its origins back to the beginning of time as we know it makes any sense at all.

But Paul and his apostolic colleagues, along with all the others in the early years of the church who accepted Jesus' invitation to follow him, had that hunch of faith and engaged in conversations

in their communities and in their cities
about what their Creator's forgiveness and reconciliation of the world
meant for them as they discovered, appreciated, and appropriated
the work and witness of Jesus and his apostles.

One theme that runs through these early Christian conversations
is the covenant with Abraham and Sarah.

It focuses with crystal clarity
on God's intent for his human creatures.
"I will be with you wherever we go," God says,
"so you can be a blessing in my world,
among all the peoples I have created."
When they mess up, and they will,
I will forgive them.
When they divide up into factions, and they will,
I will reconcile them.
When they ignore me, and they will,
I will pester them with my presence.
Now, let's get on with the work
of building my kin-dom."

That's what God is faithful to,
God's original intent of companionship in caring for the creation.
That's the missioning in which Paul and his colleagues endure,
no matter what happens to them or how they are received.
Their hunch, inkling, intuition is formed and reformed
into a deeper and deeper conviction
that the faithfulness of God to that God's original intent
is revealed most clearly in what that God finally did
in Jesus of Nazareth
to forgive and reconcile the world.

Their faithfulness flowed from God's faithfulness
to the loving hope for all creation
promised in the beginning.
It was a response of gratitude
for the mercy and grace freely offered
by the source and spring of life itself.
Nothing else gave people the strength
to endure through missioning the creation into its potential.

And the strength of that gift of life endured through death
into a closer intimacy with God, others, and self
in the next realm of being.

I found myself this week thinking again
about the dramatic discovery of the true nature of this God
that Paul was led through on the Damascus road
and in his subsequent ministry.

The *metanoia* generated by the Trinity
reformed his soul, his life, his legacy.

From prosecutor and persecutor
he was transfigured into advocate and ambassador.

When we think of Paul's conversion,
we tend to focus on the dramatic encounter with the risen Christ
as Paul was going to wreak more havoc on the early Christian movement.

But I wondered this week whether God's faithfulness
there was not at work in an earlier recorded incident.

That incident was the stoning of Stephen.

Paul is clearly at the centre of setting up this execution.

I wondered whether Stephen's pray to forgive his executioners
might have cracked open Paul's soul
to being nourished by a different vision of this God of Abraham and Sarah.

Was the forgiveness in the air that day
the precursor to the reconciliation in the air
on the Damascus road
and in the care of the Christian community that followed?

Paul had lots to endure as his life took this new direction.
The endurance of his faithfulness was rooted in God's faithfulness
to God's original intent to constantly seek the good of creation.

We honour God's faithfulness in gratitude
by agreeing to accept the offer of freedom in Christ
to align ourselves with God's intent of blessing all of creation.

My Notes

My Prayers



Prayers of the People

Assure us that you hear our prayers, dear Lord,
those we have spoken aloud
and those are still forming in our souls.

We pray for:
endurance in active hope through this pandemic;
comfort and recovery for those enduring homes destroyed;
strength for those whose dignity is being attacked;
compassionate wisdom for those in power;
gracious care among those oppressed;
companionship for those who are isolated and lonely;
provocative possibilities for those awakening
to your faithfulness.

And take us deeper this morning
into the faithfulness revealed in your prayer
as we sing it together: