

**Brian's Sermon Text for Sunday Worshiping at Brentwood
Sunday, August 30, 2020**

**Imitating Jesus Christ
(Psalm 26:1-8 and 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1)**

**... do everything for the glory of God.
(1 Cor 10:13b)**



Word to Ponder = Imitate

Congregational Wisdom = like a child, try to be like, sincerest form of flattery, modelling, dying and being born again, channelling, aspiring to be, intentional copying, in context, inspiring, 'What would Jesus do?', following in his footsteps

The news sent a silencing shock
through the praying group yesterday morning.
One of our beloved ruling elders here at Brentwood,
Emmanuel Boadu,
had died early that morning.
He had been living with cancer for quite a while,
but, at the end, died of a brain bleed.
Emmanuel was 56 last April.

So, my reflections this morning deal with death.
More specifically, they deal with how Jesus and Paul dealt with death
and what we may find inspiring and instructive in their faith in its face.

At the end of our conversation yesterday,
Janet, Emmanuel's wife,
said something that I really appreciated hearing.

"Well, it's in God's hands."

Both parts of that comment were strangely comforting.

It is in God's hands and it is well.

That wellness will not take away the agony of separation,
the pain of parting, the pangs of grief.

Anyone who has lost a close loved one know that.

I think especially of Lynn, of Trish, and of Susan this morning,
but most of us have suffered a painful loss in our lives.

For all of their lives that we know of,
Jesus and Paul faced both the threat and the reality of death.

They challenged the attitudes and behaviours
of most of their neighbours

and were persecuted and executed for it.

They did not seek death,

but accepted it when it came

with prayers for forgiveness on their lips.

And they did not see death as the end,
but rather a passage in their lives.

I've been saying those words

in the funeral services that I've done

for the last 42 years.

They sink deeper into my soul

every time I share them with those gathered

to give thanks in our mourning.

It was not until I was making the final revisions
to the PowerPoint for this morning

that I realized how many pictures of embrace

I had chosen for today's slides.

But that's what death is in God's hands.

It's a passage into a closer embrace

by our Creator, Redeemer, and Reformer.

Our creation and redemption

is further reformed in every dimension of the kin-dom of God

in ways we can trust to be well.

Memories of the grace with which Emmanuel was among us in the flesh
also drew my attention to another dimension of Paul's faith
that I had not noticed deeply enough before.

Dan mentioned his appreciation of Emmanuel's smile and laughter.
There was a considerate calm and courage in our interactions
that came to mind as I was composing this reflection
on imitating Jesus Christ.

That's the discipline Paul is urging on his friends in Corinth,
his friends in Christ no matter how contentious and rebellious
they seemed to be in their confusions.

With those inside and outside of the visible church,
Paul went to great lengths to embrace them
with the energy, the glory, of God's forgiving and reconciling love.

He did everything for the glory of God.

Paul's faith that God had reconciled the world
back into family at table in council for the care of the estate
was the source and inspiration for everything Paul did.

It gave him the calm and courage
to go anywhere
to extend the embrace of this new family in Christ
he had been drawn into in such a dramatic way
on that road to Damascus.

I'm not sure yet how we will celebrate
Emmanuel's with-ness and witness among us.

There are Ghanaian traditions to be honoured,
there are pandemic precautions to be considered,
and the family needs time to sort things through.

I pray our reflections this morning
have expressed a bit of my gratitude
for the education in the faith that Emmanuel offered me
as we both sought to serve you
in nourishing souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ
through Brentwood Presbyterian Church
for the glory of God.

My Notes

My Prayers



Prayers of the People

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

We pray for:
those who mourn;
those who sacrifice for the wellness of future generations;
those who stand up for your justice and kindness;
those with the humility to awaken to wrongs
and seek improvements;
those who plant seeds of your peace;
those who comfort those who mourn.

And take us deeper this morning
into the comfort that your embrace provides
as revealed in your prayer as we sing it together: