

# Brian's Sermon Text for Sunday Worshiping at Brentwood

Sunday, Oct 4, 2020

Celebrating World Wide Communion Sunday

## Stewards of the Mysteries of God

(Psalm 19 and 1 Corinthians 14:1-33a)

Let all things be done for building up.

(1 Cor 14:26b)



### Word to Ponder = Steward

Congregational Wisdom = keeper with responsibilities, caring person, righteous management of our talents, time, and treasures to further God's plans, shepherds, resources for future planning, eyes off self, guardians, responsibility, entrusted with someone else's property

There are two messages  
that come through strongly in these conversations  
that Paul is convening among the Corinthians  
that I have not paid enough attention to yet  
in this series of sermons on what the Corinthians can teach us  
about being church in our time and place.

The first message from Paul is, "I don't know everything!"  
The second message is, "Neither do you!"

There is a humility in Paul's formulations and expressions of the faith he explores with the Corinthian Christians and their neighbours that often gets lost in our bitter battles over whose version of Christianity is true.

There is in the ways he talks about his trust in and loyalty to Jesus Christ a recognition that he only sees in part.

There is much yet to learn as he grows in his faith and when he sees God face-to-face.

I don't think you can really hear and understand the Paul who wrote these letters, who engaged in these conversations, unless you grasp the fact that he really believed the God to whom he bore witness was a mystery beyond the understanding and control of all those in dialogue trying to figure out their faith.

Too often those dialogues and conversations descended into bitter battles over beliefs and practices.

In many ways, our contemporary bitter battles are but an extension of ones from generations past.

There has never been a time in the history of this earthen vessel we call the church that schisms have not rent us asunder.

But there is something in Paul's way of modeling the faith that is worth pondering.

He saw himself and encouraged all of us to be stewards, to be ambassadors, to be representatives of this God who was so mysterious.

What's that all about?

How can that be?

How can you represent something you don't understand?

No wonder people refuse to take this Christian faith seriously! It makes no sense to commit to something you don't understand.

This is just delusional foolishness.

From the point of view of one of the key tenets of contemporary culture,  
it is delusional foolishness.

If we are convinced that you have to understand before you can believe,  
then Paul's faith makes no sense.

Paul was a learned man, filled with the understanding of his culture.  
That did not help him flourish as his Creator intended.

And that's the point, isn't it?

The Christian faith is a loving relationship with a loving Creator,  
a Creator who mourns the ways we have rejected that relationship,  
a Creator who comes in human flesh to forgive and reconcile,  
a Creator who is determined to bring to completion  
the original goodness intended by that love in the beginning.

One of our formulations for understanding the presence of this God  
imagines three presences in one –  
the creative, redemptive, and the reforming presences  
all still at work in restoring loving relationships for their original purpose.

For Paul, the great revelatory insight into the mysteries of God  
was the experience of forgiving and reconciling love.  
He didn't claim to understand it completely.  
He was yearning to understand it more fully  
in all these conversations that made up the life of the church.  
But God had revealed enough to him and his companions  
about God's intent for this world  
that they could be stewards of that love,  
mysterious, surprising, astounding, life-changing as it was.

So, when exploring the ways in which the Spirit  
is teaching Paul about maturing in his faith in Jesus Christ  
to align more fully with the energy of God in the world,  
look for the prominence of God's love in his ponderings.  
In the midst of all the turmoil in the first century communities  
where Paul was growing in his relationship with the world's Creator,  
all the bitter battles over who had it right,  
he resorts again and again to God's love being the greatest truth.

## My Notes



## My Prayers

### Prayers of the People

Assure us deep in our souls that you have heard these prayers spoken aloud into this worshiping or quietly within.

And hear these common prayers this morning:  
for those afflicted by corona virus;  
for those who mourn loved ones who have passed on;  
for all who gather around your table this day;  
for faith and wisdom to effectively live your love in your world;  
for resilience in making further adjustments in our lives together;  
for your light being noticed in separated and lonely lives;  
for a deeper understand of your forgiving and reconciling love.

And help us hear again the comfort and challenge, the gift and risk, of your prayer that has inspired your people for generations:

[singing of the Lord's Prayer]