

And There's More

Pentecost 9 B 2024 + St. Andrew's Kelowna

+++

Last week on holiday, I had the chance to meet a friend for ice cream at the shop in McCurdy Corner. It's an odd place for an ice cream shop: it is encased in the concrete of a strip mall and massive parking lot. It was still 35°C at 7:00pm and the concrete was releasing all the heat it had bore during the day. It was hard to miss the metaphor as we stood there in the intense heat with dripping ice cream cones discussing the state of the world. From climate change, to the American Supreme Court's recent decision to grant a President absolute immunity from criminal prosecution within the sphere of constitutional authority, to the continued polarization of communities, to her children and the future. Between blobs of melting ice cream, our conversation settled on what it might mean to be people of peace; what it might look like to be the ones who commit to the space in between the ever-growing divides.

There are fascinating conversations going on around us right now about this. Alexandra Hudson is one voice in the conversations through her new book *The Soul of Civility* that delves into what true civility is. It is not politeness and manners and it's not the opposite of that either. True civility is recovering the gift of being human and honouring others and ourselves with dignity, so much dignity that we when disagree deeply - and there times we absolutely must- we do so as equals with respect for the fullness our shared humanity.¹ Considering our baptismal vow to respect the dignity of every human being, this is certainly a way with which we can agree..... and, the gospel says, there's more. Treating one another with true respect is indeed a calling these days and there is more: God is building a new humanity.

In Christ, as the letter to the Ephesians unfolds for us this morning, God has achieved and offers a tremendous reconciliation not only between God and humankind but also between one of the foundational divides in the first century context: between Jews and Gentile (the rest of the know world). Those who couldn't be farther from each other in belief and practice are not only brought to respect for one another but are made into a new humanity in Christ together. And it is both together, on the foundation of the prophets and apostles with Christ as the cornerstone that they become the living temple, the dwelling the place for God. And as early Christians began to understand this, they looked back at saw in Jesus the fulfilment of moments like the one we heard in 2nd Samuel today. King David realizes he is living in a great cedar house while the Ark of God resides in a tent. And so he decides to build God a house to which God says, 'No you're not, I'm going to build a house out of you'. From the descendants of David, God will established a kingdom, and will raise up a king to whom God will be a father and the king a son to God. In Jesus comes a house that King David would never had imagined in his wildest dreams and could never have built with his own hands.

And so we can join in with the ideas that try to get us to the base level of respecting one another in our divisions and we also must remember that God longs for household far beyond what we

¹ Interview on "How to be a Better Human" Podcast.
https://link.chtbl.com/RgRel-0-?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

can build; a household that is and will be built by the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit. What stuck me most this week was that what Christ offers to those who were far away and to those who were close is exactly the same thing and that is peace. *eirénē* in the Greek from "to join, tie together into a whole – properly, wholeness, i.e. when all essential parts are joined together; peace (God's gift of wholeness)." It's that kind of peace, a wholeness that is given freely to both sides of the divide, a wholeness that needs both sides of the divide and needs Christ. A peace that Christ wrought in his very body, through his very life; a peace that will be found in fullness as those on both sides of divides, through the power of the Spirit, choose a Christ-like pattern of laying down their egos, self-righteousness, pride, pain, greed, destruction so that newness of life may grow. And it takes nothing less than the power of Christ in the Spirit to do this. We are so far from this in our world and yet it is there in pockets. There are countless stories of people of making the choice for this kind of peace in extreme moments and in every day patterns and our hope is that like yeast in bread this kingdom is growing and will keep growing until the new creation comes. To be people of peace in this generation is to seek and to embody Christ's peace however and whenever we can. And there's more...

The VST Course that we hosted two weeks ago went so well and I will send out a summary with photos to everyone this week. One of things we explored was the biblical understanding that in Christ God was reconciling *all things* on earth and in heaven to Godself. There is reconciliation of all life- humanity, creation, all that is seen and unseen- through the cross of Christ. The reconciliation of us to God, humanity to each other, goes hand in hand with the reconciliation of creation. We see this so clearly in our failings: the more we privilege profit over human lives the more we desecrate creation, the more we choose power over one another the more the earth suffers in our wars and destruction: it's all of a piece. Elsewhere Paul writes that all creation longs for us to be revealed as children of God, as this new humanity, reconciled to God, to our ourselves and to creation. Christ's peace is all of a piece: God, humanity and creation.

And so when you think about the future, when you have conversations about what is to come and how to be, and why Christ is so necessary in all of it: think of the Eucharist. It is a sign and sacrament of our reconciliation with God and with each other as we gather at Christ's table. As all are fed from the same bread and the same wine, part of one another in Christ. And it is also a sign and sacrament of the reconciliation of creation. Creation is there in the kingdom feast and it's not a bunch of grapes and sheaf of wheat on the table but its what we have taken- how we have taken, how we have treated creation so that we may be fed. And we offer the bread and wine so that in that taking and eating we may know the presence of Christ. And that is always the question for us: in this action, in this decision, in this use of creation: is it something I can offer, is it some we can offer, to God to make Christ known, to make the reconciliation of Christ known in the world?

Amen.