

Sermon 9th September 2007 – Holy Covenant
Jasmine Dron

Sermon: Sunday 9th September
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Readings:
Jeremiah 18: 1-11
Psalm 139: 1-18
Luke 14:25-35

“Loving God may the words of my lips and the meditations of all our hearts
be acceptable to you our creator and redeemer, Amen”

Letter to god intercepted by wise onlooker.

God,

I regret to inform you that you have created a dud!

I would like to exchange who I am for the following reasons:

It would appear that the brain you have supplied me with simply will not
retain the information I want it to... FAULTY

and when I see a pile of things that need doing... I do my best to avoid them...

FAULTY

This brings me to my next gripe... My situation

Where to begin!!!!

For one thing I am trying to work out a doctrine of the trinity, economic...
immanent... ... as I have already mentioned... my brain is not adequate for the
job. Secondly I think I need more adventure... maybe a dash of travel... a wild
journey.... new and creative things to do!

Hmmm what else...

PAUSE

Excuse me for interrupting but I couldn't help overhearing your prayer...
aren't you going to wait for the adventure you're on to finish before you
begin a new one???

and I hope you don't think I am being too forward but I think you are being
slightly arrogant and narcissistic and quite frankly, insulting the creature of
the universe.

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You're situation... I suggest you open your eyes....

LOOK...

Don't you notice...

How much there is to learn in life... doesn't that excite you... that there is a sea of things yet to learn... that you will never know it all... doesn't it inspire you ... when a piece of knowledge suddenly makes its way from your heart and joins the fabric of who you are...

Don't you notice...

The beauty of life...

The changing seasons... the arrival of new leaves on trees... bringing colour and contrast... the fresh food you see when you walk with the people you have yet to meet at markets... the free taste tests of chocolate fudge...the snippets of creativity... the colours... the smells... the sounds which overtake your senses

Don't you notice...

The psalmist seems to notice as he resounds...

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

Do I know very well...? David to whom this psalm is attributed may know well... the handsome King... but perhaps I don't know well, perhaps you don't know well

Perhaps what you know.... is the voice of the school-ground bully grinding harsh words about your limited worth deep into the flesh of your psyche.

Or you may know the negative self-talk that begins the moment that you make mistake that proves you are not perfect..

When you stand before the mirror and it reminds you that you have too many wobbly bits....

Perhaps it begins when you hear how successful everyone else is and you on the other are nothing....

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Jesus words in the gospel today in contrast to the beauty of this psalm are obscene and offensive... on surface value one might take these words to affirm negative self talk, a road of false humility or a state perpetual guilt...

“The call to hate one’s life....”

What does this mean coming from the mouth of the one who uttered an ethic of love and peace, a Jesus who broke down the oppressive dealings of injustice? to bring life to all people...

In the reading from Jeremiah we have another image of God as creator, as continually creative.... Yet it too finishes with words which are harsh and threatening.

For too long have large parts of the Christian church used readings such as these to affirm a retributive God... who demands a certain legalism in ‘his’ followers... who puts limits on creation and binds them in rules of what is allowed and what is not...

This image of ‘redemption’ is a doctrine which perpetuates guilt.

A deeper reading of today’s texts does not eliminate their intensity but does turn them away from retribution and finds them crawling with life, indeed the fullness of life...

On the one hand we have the issue of creation on the other redemption these two have been traditionally separated...

Creation was something which happened long ago ... even in the process of evolution we seem to label creation as a past phenomenon....

And redemption... something which is made possible in Christ.... which affirms a humanity guilty of such terrible sin that it was necessary for Christ to die in the human’s place... again more guilt!

How do the readings today help us to understand creation and redemption? They certainly do not make it possible for the two to be separated. Rather creation and redemption are inextricably linked.

It is in the creative process that redemption occurs.

The text in Jeremiah lends itself to a reading which takes the perspective that judgement occurs after the creative process. It is linear, creation happens, and then judgement occurs.

Yet the pattern of God's dealings of judgement with Israel as we find it in the OT seems to be a way of restorative recreation rather than Damning retribution. We find many images like that of the potter and the clay... a refiner's fire in Isaiah, a wiped dish or a plumb line in Kings... Just as a dish will not work unless it is clean, so too a pot will not do what it is mean to do or be in the eyes of the potter unless it has been returned to a lump of clay and moulded afresh....

Life comes through the process of dying...

This approach to redemption may help in our reading of Luke's gospel text...

Hating one's life may not mean to turn away from it but rather be a process of death in order to enter fullness of life.

In the same way the pot is remoulded in order to be what it is intended, so too are we called individually and collectively to experience a kind of death... not a physical death but rather a dying to those parts of our life which consume us...

brokenness, grief, consumerism, Negative self talk, violence, war, destruction, hopelessness, poverty. Death is those things which keep us from God, our neighbour, and our true self.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus' himself we are enabled to see death in a new light. Death becomes a passage to freedom. Death is the road to life. This death to life, self, mother, father, brother, sister, is not a turning away from, a giving up on, but entering more fully into relationship which is able to listen and stand in the face of Joy and struggle, sickness and health.

We remember the words of Jesus

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'Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'

Hearing these words I am immediately drawn to the Eucharist. To which we will soon come.

It is in the Eucharist that we are called to death. The Eucharist 'confronts us most brutally with the collapse of dreams, so that we may learn the deeper hope given in the breaking of the bread... It invites us to be rooted in the deeper dark soil of God's promise.' (Radcliffe)

It is from this place, only, that we can rise from death bearing the fruit of Justice, Grace and Humility. It is through this rhythm of death and resurrection that we as community learn to be the body of Christ. We are empowered to be involved in the dangers of this world in a 'shockingly complete and painful way.' (Ford)

It is in the transformative act of dying through which we are invited to live. Death shall be no more.