



Month of Stewardship Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, August 12th, 2018

Christianity and Christianities: Stewardship to and in a Changing Community



"The Last Supper" – Water Colour on Silk 1953: Kim Ki-chang,

"The Last Supper" – The Venetian School 1542: Jacopo Bassano



Today we have the privilege of welcoming Sonia Yoo. Sonia, is in a sense, the face of Korean Christianity in the Uniting Church. She is a member of and leader in the Sydney Cheil Church, Concord, the largest Korean congregation in Sydney. Sonia also worked in cultural affairs for the National Assembly of the Uniting Church for many years. She is legendary in Uniting Church history.

We are at a turning point in Australian cultural history, but also church history. Today there are more immigrants becoming Australians, as a proportion of society, than since the Gold Rush of the 1850s. Then it was for gold and wealth, now it is for prosperity through skills offered in a globalized economy. The changing face of Australia raises the challenge of the changing face of Christianity, where the European population has become more secularized, while immigrants are the increasing base for the Church. Today we shall listen to Sonia and have the opportunity, after the service, to reflect with her upon Korean Christianity in particular. The purpose of stewardship today is for something we cannot yet see, a changing church which we are being called to grow.

GATHERING

Announcements

Welcome

In the name of God,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with you

And with you

Hymn: Guide me O thou Great Redeemer (TiS 569, Cwm Rhonnda, William Williams)

Introduction to the Theme

Community Prayer: Recipe for the Bread of Life

In this prayer, motivated by the Gospel reading about “Jesus the bread of life”, I use the metaphor as a recipe, akin to our contemporary cooking shows.

Start with the Word made flesh –
full of grace and truth.

Add living water
drawn from the spring
that gushes to eternal life.

Mix with the Spirit
that blows where it will.

Flavour with fruit
of the true and living vine.
*(Note: will contain love.
Will produce joy that is full.)*

And most importantly of all:

Give Jesus’ flesh for the life of the world.
(Requires a cross.

*Leaves an empty tomb.
Serves God's world.)*

Our Confession and Reconciliation

Let us be still and listen to the voice of God

Silence

Leader: Let us confess

That our culinary skills have not been as good as they could be

That we have lacked imagination – cooking the easy things again and again – while leaving the challenges, the real challenges to one side

That integrating new foods, new thinking, new cultures, is something we are called to by the Spirit

***O God, forgive us and create in
us a new heart to build
communities founded grounded in love***

The Peace

Peace be with you;
and also with you

Children leave for SMG

LET'S HEAR THE WORD

Some Anecdotal Thoughts About Christianity, the Church and Culture

“In 10 years, the number of congregations in our diocese where a language other than English predominates has almost doubled, from 23 to 40 today. If you walk through the cathedral on any given day, you will witness an incredible cultural diversity among the people visiting and praying here. Our Chinese ministry at the heart of Melbourne is a

visible sign of our commitment to serving the people who live, work, and now worship in this great culturally diverse city.

The Primate of the Australian Anglican Church, Archbishop Philip Freier, in a recent interview with the “Australian” newspaper.

The idea of a Christian society is one which we can accept or reject; but if we are to accept it, we must treat Christianity with a great deal more intellectual respect than is our wont; we must treat it as being for the individual a matter primarily of thought and not of feeling.

TS Eliot, “Christianity and Culture” and “The Idea of a Christian Society”

Readings

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33 (Good News Translation) Jill McNamara
Earlier, the prophet Nathan had told David that as a result of his affair concerning Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah, her husband, the sword – violence – would never leave David’s house. Nathan’s words find fulfillment over the next chapters of Samuel but in particular in the account of the death of his rebellious son, Absalom. David’s response to Absalom is first rather passive, but then he begins to push back. Part of the tragedy of violence played out, is the story about one of David’s son Absalom, for whom David has mixed feelings. Initially, David remains passive, but later pushes back at Absalom, appointing his best generals to lead an army against his son. He still bears some feelings toward his son for when all preparations have been made and in the hearing of all the troops, he instructs his generals: ‘For my sake, deal gently with the young man Absalom’ (2 Sam 18:5). Now the scene is set for David’s great tragedy, the death of Absalom, which is the subject of today’s reading. He is caught in the branches of a tree by his beautiful hair (2 Sam 18:9) – an aspect of Absalom’s beauty becomes the means of his downfall. Contrary to the clear instructions of David, Joab, one of his generals, wastes no time in having Absalom killed, taking the lead in stabbing him through the heart (18:10-17). The story of David’s reign is truly one of tragedy. And yet the wonder, and the hope, of it all is that the people of this story are portrayed as the people of God, who continues to work with, and through them. The depth of tragedy on the human plane is surpassed only by the irony of God’s overwhelming grace.

⁵ He gave orders to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai: “For my sake don’t harm the young man Absalom.” And all the troops heard David give this command to his officers.

⁶ David’s army went out into the countryside and fought the Israelites in Ephraim Forest. ⁷ The Israelites were defeated by David’s men; it

was a terrible defeat, with twenty thousand men killed that day. ⁸ The fighting spread over the countryside, and more men died in the forest than were killed in battle.

⁹ Suddenly Absalom met some of David's men. Absalom was riding a mule, and as it went under a large oak tree, Absalom's head got caught in the branches. The mule ran on and Absalom was left hanging in midair.

¹⁵ Then ten of Joab's soldiers closed in on Absalom and finished killing him.

³¹ Then the Ethiopian^[b] slave arrived and said to the king, "I have good news for Your Majesty! Today the LORD has given you victory over all who rebelled against you!"

³² "Is the young man Absalom all right?" the king asked.

The slave answered, "I wish that what has happened to him would happen to all your enemies, sir, and to all who rebel against you."

³³ The king was overcome with grief. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he cried, "O my son! My son Absalom! Absalom, my son! If only I had died in your place, my son! Absalom, my son!"

John 6:35, 41-51 (Good News Translation)

Caroline Turner

This reading centres upon two basic ideas. The first is the saying that "Jesus is the bread of life" and the second, is the explanation as to why some believe and others don't. The idea of Jesus as the bread of life, clearly carries sacramental images for Christians, but at its most basic, the idea in John is that Jesus is God's envoy, God's messenger who offers life, not just *after* death, but *before* death; meaning and substance (salvation) to our lives here and now. The idea of why some people do not believe and others do, is disturbing because it is opaque. John's community of faith, struggled to understand why the Gospel about Jesus was not embraced on the scale they had expected. In particular the Jews who had remained in the synagogue and not come into the church were a source of real frustration. In the reading, it all seems a rather water-tight system, where those who believe are predisposed by God to do so, and those not, not so predisposed. This is the language of fundamentalism, and ultimately of sectarianism – indeed here of anti-Semitism, where the Jews are cast as "children of the devil" (8:37-47). Properly understood, John's thought keeps the door open to all people: Jew, Gentile, Caucasian, Asian, African and anyone else. Jesus gave his life – in life and in death – to bear the offer of life to all, so that all may choose to be "chosen", so that all may accept God's choice to love and accept them.

³⁵ “I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “Those who come to me will never be hungry; those who believe in me will never be thirsty.

⁴¹ The people started grumbling about him, because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² So they said, “This man is Jesus son of Joseph, isn't he? We know his father and mother. How, then, does he now say he came down from heaven?”

⁴³ Jesus answered, “Stop grumbling among yourselves. ⁴⁴ People cannot come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me; and I will raise them to life on the last day. ⁴⁵ The prophets wrote, ‘Everyone will be taught by God.’ Anyone who hears the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶ This does not mean that anyone has seen the Father; he who is from God is the only one who has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ I am telling you the truth: he who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, but they died. ⁵⁰ But the bread that comes down from heaven is of such a kind that whoever eats it will not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If you eat this bread, you will live forever. The bread that I will give you is my flesh, which I give so that the world may live.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Hymn: The Great Love of God (TiS 164, Thailand, Daniel Thambyrajah Niles)

Some Thoughts: Sonia Yoo from Cheil Uniting Church, Concord, reflects with us upon Korean History and Korean Christianity

Let's Give

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of the People

Annette Burne

The one who prays ends each petition with the words, ***“help us to see beyond ourselves”***, and the congregational response, ***“to live the kingdom”***.

Lord’s Prayer

Let us say the Lord’s Prayer

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.***

***For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여
이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며
나라이 임하옵시며
뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이
땅에서도 이루어지이다.
오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고
우리가 우리에게
죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이
우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고

우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고
 다만 악에서 구하옵소서
 대개 나라와 권세와 영광이
 아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

Closing Hymn: I the Lord of Sea and Sky (TiS 658, Here I am Lord, Daniel Schutte)

Blessing and Sending Out

Christ is life!

Through Christ
 we seek to read the signs of the times
 with perception and discernment,
 without fear, with imagination and courage

Our service has ended

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Going Out: Father bless us as we go (TiS 781, Kookaburra, Robin Mann)

Musical Postlude

Organist:

Jim Abraham

