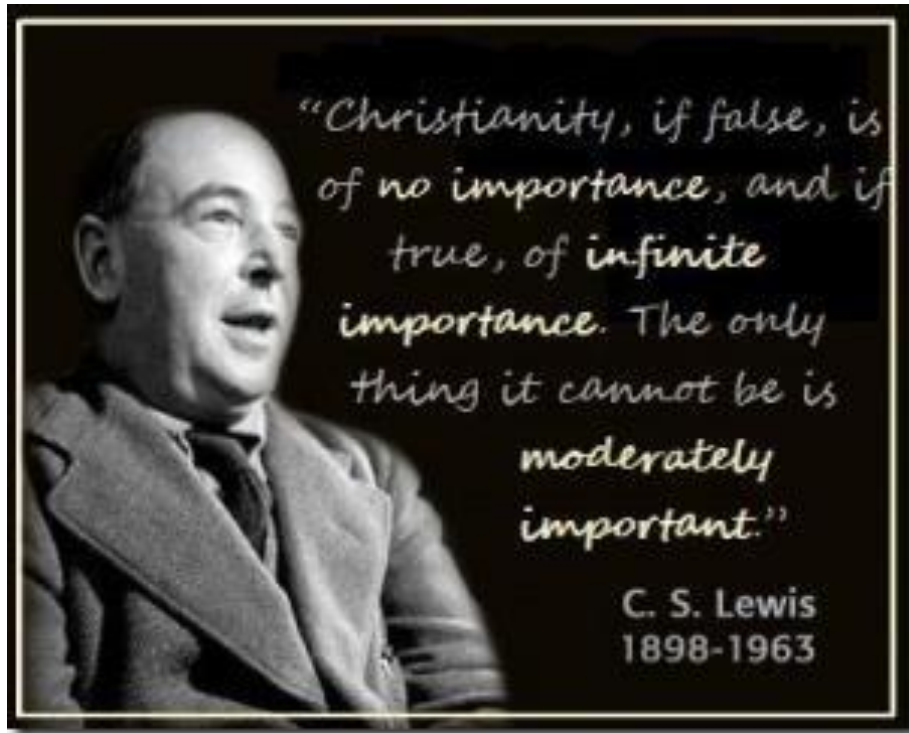




Fifth Sunday in Easter Sunday, April 29th, 2018

Easter Faith: Defensive or Engaging?



Resurrection Faith, Easter Faith is essentially about the celebration of life over death. This is to be understood broadly. At its heart, Christianity is a carnival of joy and hope: “if God is for us human beings, who can be against us”, as the apostle Paul put it. These last few weeks in the Easter season, we have been focusing upon a number of themes: through the lens of “doubting Thomas”, the legitimate place of questioning – faith without questions runs the risk of having little substance. Next, through the lens of the story of the Road to Emmaus, we heard of the need for Christians to look toward the horizon, to see the bigger picture, rather than be paralyzed, as were the disciples, as they fixated on Jesus’ death. Last week at the baptism of River Swinney, we heard the reading about Jesus as the Good Shepherd and listened to Banjo Paterson’s famous Australian story of “The Bush Christening” where Paterson questions the way the Christian church has at times been mistaken in its baptismal emphasis upon human sin and brokenness, rather than the good news of God’s embrace of humanity and creation.

Today, we hear the Gospel reading from John’s community, concerning the “vine and the branches” which is all about radical love grounded in Jesus. We discover however that, John’s community struggled to live up to their inspired words.

GATHERING

Announcements

Greeting

Christ is risen!

Sing a new song!

Sing praise to our still-laughing Easter God;

who has rolled away the limitations of yesterday.

Immerse your anxiety and despair in the fountain of resurrection;
for God takes ordinary things;

and makes them extraordinary.

We turn our eyes to the Paschal Candle

We light the candle knowing that our faith in Jesus

and what he represents

is sometimes strong,

sometimes elusive,

Easter is the season when we thoughtfully celebrate

Christ breaking the bounds of death

Hymn: Sing of the Lord's Goodness (TiS 183, The Lord's Goodness, Ernest Sands)

Amen

The Peace

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Giving Thanks for the Easter/Resurrection Community of the Church

The Gospel reading about the Christian community as the "vine and branches" talks about relationships with Jesus Christ and each other, the litmus test of which is about what they produce ("fruit"). In what follows, I have adopted a prayer of the Iona Community in Scotland about church as community, as relationships. We end listening to the meditative hymn of Psalm 23

that we sang last Sunday, celebrating God's consistency and loyal love that pursues us.

O God

Thank you for our time in community,

for deep if fleeting friendships,

for those conversations that extend into the night,

for the sharing of who we are:

vulnerability

lubricated by laughter...and

sometimes tears.

For the freedom to serve others and to affirm ourselves

In the face of all you know and we know of our lives

And we thank you for those signs that the churches,

with which so many are

disaffected and unhappy,

can yet be your body in the world.

The Lord is My Shepherd (Brian Boniwell)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sZaJpllj_c

The kids leave for Sunday Morning Group (SMG) after a song: Jesus put this song into our hearts (TiS 670, Jesus put this song, Graham Kendrick)

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

Some Insights about the Importance of an Engaging Christian Faith

To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible. **Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)**

Although argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned.

Austin Farrer, "The Christian Apologist" (1904-1968)

Rome taught me what to think. Oxford taught me how to think
Gabriel Daly OSA, The Grace of Change, The Tablet, November 18th, 2017

“Religions are expressions of the sound human intuition that there is something beyond being as we experience it in this life”. The rationalists are like travellers in a non-English speaking country who think they can make themselves understood by shouting.”

Marilynn Robinson, “The Givenness of Things”(1943-)

Acts 8:26-40 (Good News Translation)

Beth Facer

Some people saw eunuchs as not fully human. They were faulty forms of the human race. They were impotent males, unable to procreate. Some were like that because they had been castrated or had castrated themselves. Such men were often forced to the margins of society. They often appear in other roles, especially as government officials, such as this eunuch from Ethiopia. There they were safe to have in court. They could be trusted not to cause chaos through sexual misbehaviour. For the early Christian community, Jesus and his death were seen as creating a surplus of goodness which made up for and covered the sins of others. "Christ died for our sins" was incomprehensible good news for this rejected man, moved to conversion.

²⁶ An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get ready and go south^[a] to the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This road is not used nowadays.)^[b] ²⁷⁻²⁸ So Philip got ready and went. Now an Ethiopian eunuch, who was an important official in charge of the treasury of the queen of Ethiopia, was on his way home. He had been to Jerusalem to worship God and was going back home in his carriage. As he rode along, he was reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to that carriage and stay close to it.” ³⁰ Philip ran over and heard him reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. He asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹ The official replied, “How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?” And he invited Philip to climb up and sit in the carriage with him. ³² The passage of scripture which he was reading was this:

“He was like a sheep that is taken to be slaughtered,
 like a lamb that makes no sound when its wool is cut off.
 He did not say a word.

³³ He was humiliated, and justice was denied him.
 No one will be able to tell about his descendants,
 because his life on earth has come to an end.”

³⁴ The official asked Philip, “Tell me, of whom is the prophet saying this? Of himself or of someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began to speak; starting from this passage of scripture, he told him the Good News about Jesus. ³⁶ As they travelled down the road, they came to a place where there was some water, and the official said, “Here is some water. What is to keep me from being baptized?” ³⁷ [c]

³⁸ The official ordered the carriage to stop, and both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The official did not see him again, but continued on his way, full of joy. ⁴⁰ Philip found himself in Azotus; he went on to Caesarea, and on the way he preached the Good News in every town.

John 15:1-8 (Good News Translation)

Richard Facer

This part of John’s Gospel is one of the most sublime parts of the New Testament. It is a call to the Christian community to live out its spirituality. Using the image of the vine and branches, John calls his people to be aware of their spiritual state: they are grounded in Jesus and the Father. This deep relationship of mutuality (“abiding”) leads to ethics, to love and graciousness beyond what the ancient world taught.

15 “I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will be clean and bear more fruit. ³ You have been made clean already by the teaching I have given you. ⁴ Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ “I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me. ⁶ Those who do not remain in me are thrown out like a branch and dry up; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, where they are burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it. ⁸ My Father's glory is shown by your bearing much fruit; and in this way you become my disciples.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Some thoughts...defensive or engaging faith

Offering

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

Jane Ann Tainsh

The one who prays after a series of petitions says, "Raise us Lord" and the people respond, "Make us a risen people".

We end with the Lord's Prayer

Our Father

*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 for ever. 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

An Exercise: What fruit or fruits do you offer to this community as we seek to put faith into action. Is there any new fruit you might offer?

Final Hymn: Lord you have come to the lakeshore (Tú has venido a la orilla, Cesáreo Gabaraín, New Century Hymnal, 173)

You have come down to the lakeshore,
 seeking neither the wise nor the wealthy,
 but only asking for me to follow.

*O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes
 kindly smiling you have called out my name.
 On the sand I have abandoned my small boat.
 Now with you, I will seek other seas.*

You know full well my possessions,
 neither treasure nor weapons for conquest,
 just these my fishnets and will for working.

*O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes
kindly smiling you have called out my name.
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat.
Now with you, I will seek other seas.*

You need my hands, my exhaustion,
working love for the rest of the weary,
a love that's willing to go on loving.

*O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes
kindly smiling you have called out my name.
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat.
Now with you, I will seek other seas.*

You who have fished other waters,
you the longing of souls that are yearning,
as loving friend you have come to call me.

*O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes
kindly smiling you have called out my name.
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat.
Now with you, I will seek other seas.*

Blessing

Christ is risen!

We see reality through resurrection

We seek to live lovingly, truthfully, inclusively

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

Our service has ended.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Amen

Sung Blessing: Father bless us as we go (TiS 781, Kookaburra, Robin Mann)

Father bless us as we go
Jesus walk beside us
Holy Spirit guide us (twice)

Musical Postlude

Pianist: Rosemary Osborne

