



Fifth Sunday after Epiphany Sunday, February 10th, 2019

Called to Mission: The Christian Church 'Walled In'?



Solovetsky Monastery, Archangel, Russia

Solovetsky Monastery is located just 165km from the Arctic Circle, in the White Sea, kilometres from the port city of Archangel. Founded in the 15th century, it was one of Russia's most famous and holy monasteries, and became a major pilgrimage destination. What marks the monastery, is the defensive wall around it, employed originally to resist the Swedes and others, as well as the British, during the Crimean War. Defensive in nature, it was converted into a forced labour camp in 1917, becoming the prototype of the notorious gulag of the Soviet period. In 1990, the monastery regained its original function as a religious site.

Thus far in this season of Epiphany, we have focused upon the Hebrew prescription for society, called Jubilee. Radical as it was, demanding what we call to today, “restorative justice”, we have heard that Jesus took it further, extending the idea beyond the Hebrew world to the broader world that included all non-Jews. In short, Jesus held a dramatically radical view of the kingdom’s inclusivity.

Today we move on from Jubilee to the actual dynamics of Jesus’ invitation to the disciples to become part of this adventure. The emphasis lies upon Peter, but there are messages in this Gospel reading in particular that carry implications for us modern Christians, and the contemporary Christian church, struggling as it is with the current order of things.

GATHERING

Welcome

In the name of God
 In the name of the Son
 In the name of the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with
And also with you

**Let's Sing: I the Lord of sea and sky (TiS 658, Here I am Lord,
 Daniel Schutte)**

Opening Prayers: "Haiku for Net Leavers"

In Japanese, Haiku is a particular form or structure of poetry, with verses of three lines. The first and third lines have five syllables and the middle line has seven. The lines rarely rhyme. This structure has become popular in the west. In this poem by Ken Rookes, a poet and an artist, Minister of the Uniting Church in Australia. From 2013 - 2015, he lived at Willowra, a remote Warlpiri community in the Northern Territory, where his wife, Jane was School Principal. In this prayer/poem, Ken underscores the creativity of the fishermen, who at Jesus' suggestion go into deeper water to fish.

*They came to listen,
 to hear what he had to say;
 the Nazareth man.*

Some said that he spoke
 direct words from the Father.
 They pressed in on him.

Two boats at the shore.
 He employs one to teach from;
 a floating platform.

The lesson concludes.
 Take the boat out, he tells them,
 and let down your nets.

*The fish aren't biting.
 what would be the point? they say.
 Yet, if you insist.*

The nets are soon filled,
nearly breaking with the strain.
The other boat comes.

Simon, James and John,
fishing partners, are amazed;
can't believe their eyes!

Boat owner Simon,
falls before him, cries: Depart!
I am not worthy!

Stick with me, he said
we'll catch people, netting them
into God's kingdom!

***When they reached the shore
the fishermen left their nets
and followed Jesus.***

Amen

The Peace

The Young People leave for SMG

LET'S HEAR THE WORD

Some Sayings Conversion and Faith 'in the World'

The process of Simon's conversion is not complete. Then again, no one's conversion is ever complete. Every day, as Luther said, we must be born anew--shaken out from our old attachments each and every day. Nevertheless, he is now on the way.

John Petty, Lectionary Blogging

Paul had a vision of a transformed creation and a new community. Like most Jews of his time he would have had difficulty imagining a meaningful existence that was not embodied. He does not operate

with the assumption that the body is something we have or which holds us captive. We are our bodies, according to Paul, and our embodiment belongs to the essence of our being and our ability to express ourselves. Future hope for Paul has to envisage embodied, communicating people.

William Loader

Isaiah 6:1-8 (New Revised Standard Version NRSV)

At the turn of the sixteenth century Copernicus formulated the theory that, contrary to appearances, the sun does not revolve around the earth, but the earth goes around the sun. In the same way, when we search for what we should do in life, we at first place ourselves at the centre of our world, and try to make sense of it, while perhaps thinking that God is part of our life. Then we can experience our own “Copernican revolution”: we realise that God is not part of our life, rather we are part of God’s life. This is the discovery of Isaiah, as the scales fall from his eyes and for the first time Isaiah sees God and because of that, his own identity ‘for real’. It is this sudden dramatic experience that drives Isaiah to offer himself to Yahweh to proclaim the kingdom. If we were to read on through verses 9-13, we would discover that Isaiah’s call is a call to doing the kingdom but also experiencing deep frustration as it will fall on many deaf ears: hence Isaiah’s question, “How long Lord”? In other words, when will people wake up, when will they not only stand firm in faith, but when will the ‘faithful’ actually understand the faith they claim to subscribe to, the sort of world God actually seeks, yearns for.

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. ² Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³ And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷ The seraph^[b] touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” ⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (NRSV)

George Katsoolis

This is a strange passage, in as much as Paul appears to dump his preceding conversation about spiritual gifts of believers which are to be used for the benefit of the community, and turns to discussion of Christ's resurrection. What is the connection? Paul refers to Christ's resurrection as a tool to correct the rampant individualism of the Corinthian Christians. To say that these people had little understanding of what community means, would be an understatement. This obsession with self, carried over as well to their understanding of death and life after death, as a strictly individual affair. This is something which still holds in the modern world, where people generally understand resurrection as an individual, disembodied things: the body has a spirit which is 'released after death'. Paul is horrified at this self-indulgent understanding of life on this side and the other side of death. For Paul, we are bodies, not just have bodies. Resurrection is about the body, and future hope always envisages embodied, communicating people. This is Paul's point to these people, as he explains that even the resurrected Christ appears to and relates with a range of people, including the apostles and even him. Life, before and after death is about society, community.

15 Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters,^[a] of the good news^[b] that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, ² through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴ and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters^[c] at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.^[d] ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Luke 5:1-11 New International Version (NIV)

Gilda Dornan

This is about the call of Peter. In some senses it parallels the call of Isaiah, in that both experience a deep sense of their inadequacy – reflected in the statement about their sinfulness or brokenness. This story also has parallels with John’s story of the resurrected Jesus appearing to the disciples by the lake shore (John 21:1-11). The emphasis upon Peter is reflective of the consensus in the early church that he, Peter carried particular weight and authority. That said, he is never perceived as Jesus’ successor, as such. Mark’s Gospel portrays him as inept, Paul, who was probably the most insightful of the apostles, considers him to be somewhat shallow and unpersuasive, especially in the light of their disagreement about the place of the Gentiles, where Peter prevaricates. John, for his part, sees Peter as outclassed by the “beloved disciples”. Nevertheless, he is the agreed leader. What stands out in this story is the first stage of Peter’s conversion experience and the call made to him to ‘fish in deeper waters’, to let go of his attachments and take up the adventure with Jesus.

5 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,^[a] the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. **2** He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. **3** He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”

5 Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. **7** So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” **9** For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, **10** and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” **11** So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Hymn: As man and woman we were made (TiS 645, Sussex Carol, Brian Wren)

Some thoughts...

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

Colin Bradford

The one who prays offers the following words at the end of each series of petitions, "May our prayers feed our actions". The people respond, "May our actions confirm our words".

Hymn: Christ is alive (TiS 387, Dunedin, Brian Wren)

Blessing

It is only by listening to what we say about God,
and to how what is said, ties in with what we do,
that Christian faith carries credibility

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Amen

We sing: Shalom to you now (TIS 778, Spanish melody, Elise Shoemaker Eslinger)

Closing Postlude

Organist:

John Hughes

