



Fourth Sunday in Lent Sunday, March 31st, 2019

‘Family’ Politics



Welcome to the fourth Sunday of Lent. In one way or another these last weeks, we have been uncovering the way in which structures or “powers” – as the New Testament puts it – serve as forces for death rather than life. Lent can only be understood in its fullness, when we comprehend Jesus’ struggle with them. So far, we have thought through the power of nationalism (the state), in the light of Psalm 27 (Lent 2) the power of religion, Luke 13:1-9 (Lent 3): and today we identify the power of family. All can and do lose their proper function, when buried in their respective “identity politics”.

OUR GATHERING

Welcome

In the name of God our Father and Mother
 In the name of the Son
 In the name of the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with
And also with you

Let's Sing: Love Divine (TiS 217, Blaenwern, 590, C. Wesley)

Opening Prayers – An Act of Confession and Introspection

The word “grace” is a problem in contemporary language is as much as it has been consigned to the religious sphere. Another word which is not quite as complete but which stands in its stead is generosity. The Gospel reading before us, is about generosity but perceptively presents the complex responses that people make to generous acts. In the Story of the Prodigal, generosity provokes resentment, because it is interpreted as favouritism. This is especially the case in contexts such as families, communities and societies, where the competitive drive between siblings, social classes and cultural identity is always rife.

“A man had two sons: between generosity and resentment “

A man had two sons,
 Loved them both. The younger one
 was eager to leave.

My inheritance,
 give me my share now, before
 I become too old.

When your years are few,
 the party goes on and on;
 while the money lasts.

All good things must end.
 The cash gone, the boy must work;
 starves, while the pigs eat.

Heading for his home,
practising his 'sorry' speech:
I am unworthy!

Dad is delighted,
his son is back. Let's party;
kill the fatted calf!

The older brother
spits the dummy. All these years,
not even a goat!

I am deserving,
my useless brother is not;
I won't celebrate!

You know I love you,
Son, you're always with me;
all that's mine is yours

Your brother was lost,
now he's been restored to us:
we have to rejoice.

Try not to resent
the unworthy who receive
their moment of grace.

***Remember, you too,
though unworthy, profited
from moments 'in the sun'.***

The Peace

SMG

Introduction

Lent Event

Supporting Others: the Relationship between Ekaristi Protestant Church, East Timor and Glebe Rd, Uniting Church, Glebe, Sydney.

LET'S HEAR THE WORD

Some Sayings about Family

To us, family means putting your arms around each other and being there.

Barbara Bush

Sister is probably the most competitive relationship within the family, but once the sisters are grown, it becomes the strongest relationship.

Margaret Mead

It was by the accumulation of wealth, by the retaining of power – above all through marriage and the accompanying search for continuity in the form of sons and daughters – with all the social arrangements which dynastic continuity implied, that human beings sought to remedy the discontinuities inflicted upon them by death.

Peter Brown on Gregory of Nyssa, “The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity”, p. 301

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.

Ignatius of Loyola

Joshua 5:9-12 (New International Version)

In Joshua 5 there is the sense that the Lord is beginning again with a new generation of the people after the first generation, who had escaped Egypt, had died. A new generation now in the promised land makes a fresh commitment to the Lord. Within this framework, two rituals are important: male circumcision – which we moderns find puzzling – and the celebration of Passover. These two rites are linked closely together, as a sign of identity as free people. The two rituals are now practiced for the first time in the promised land, and in such a way that draws their past stories together. Since the people left Egypt, the Passover ritual had not been observed. In the wilderness, the only ‘bread’ available was the ‘manna’ provided by God. Now that they were in the land promised to them, they had grain to make unleavened bread. The Passover was now to be celebrated as a commemoration of the Lord’s rescue of the people from bondage.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the place has been called Gilgal^[a] to this day.

¹⁰ On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover.¹¹ The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. ¹² The manna stopped the day after^[b] they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.

Psalm 32 (International Children’s Bible): A “Maskil” – Contemplative Poem of David

Psalm 32 is a mixed type of psalm. It has elements of lament (e.g. vv. 3-4), aspects of penitential psalms (e.g. vv. 1-2, 5) and elements of wisdom psalms in vv. 1-2, and 8-9. The psalm is often classed as one of the seven penitential psalms but is really of a mixed type. As a whole, the psalmist revels in the Lord’s forgiveness (vv. 1-5) and urges other faithful ones to offer prayer to God (v. 6). The theme of forgiveness fits well with the Old Testament and Gospel readings for this week.

- 32** Happy is the person
 whose sins are forgiven,
 whose wrongs are pardoned.
- ² Happy is the person
 whom the Lord does not consider guilty.
 In that person there is nothing false.
- ³ When I kept things to myself,
 I felt weak deep inside me.
 I moaned all day long.
- ⁴ Day and night

you punished me.
 My strength was gone
 as in the summer heat. *Selah*
⁵ Then I confessed my sins to you.
 I didn't hide my guilt.
 I said, "I will confess my sins to the Lord."
 And you forgave my guilt. *Selah*
⁶ For this reason, all who obey you
 should pray to you while they still can.
 When troubles rise like a flood,
 they will not reach them.
⁷ You are my hiding place.
 You protect me from my troubles.
 You fill me with songs of salvation. *Selah*
⁸ The Lord says, "I will make you wise. I will show you where to go.
 I will guide you and watch over you.
⁹ So don't be like a horse or donkey.
 They don't understand.
 They must be led with bits and reins,
 or they will not come near you."
¹⁰ Wicked people have many troubles.
 But the Lord's love surrounds those who trust him.
¹¹ Good people, rejoice and be happy in the Lord.
 All you whose hearts are right, sing.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (International Children's Bible) Pam Tickell

This passage is rich with theological imagery and contains some very memorable statements, including, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (5:17); and "God was in Christ" (5:19). It is, however, far from a set of doctrinal statements. Rather, it forms part of Paul's struggle with trying to win over the Corinthians who have been unsettled by other Christian preachers who have been discrediting Paul and claiming that they have more impressive credentials. In the heat of defence and attack Paul engages in some of his most profound theological reflections. The famous statement, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation", belongs to Paul's argument that we approach people with a totally new system of values. The Greek word is better translated "creation" than "creature", but the effect is the same. The focus is not so much conversion and personal change, although we have often used the text to illustrate that. That is not wrong, but we need to see that its immediate reference is a change in value systems in the way we look at people and, in particular, how we evaluate their ministry. Paul uses the idea of the new creation to underline his point that his opponents who boast of their pedigree and achievements are pandering to common human values, rather than to what matters before God.

¹⁶ From this time on we do not think of anyone as the world does. It is true that in the past we thought of Christ as the world thinks. But we

no longer think of him in that way. ¹⁷ If anyone belongs to Christ, then he is made new. The old things have gone; everything is made new! ¹⁸ All this is from God. Through Christ, God made peace between us and himself. And God gave us the work of bringing everyone into peace with him. ¹⁹ I mean that God was in Christ, making peace between the world and himself. In Christ, God did not hold the world guilty of its sins. And he gave us this message of peace. ²⁰ So we have been sent to speak for Christ. It is as if God is calling to you through us. We speak for Christ when we beg you to be at peace with God. ²¹ Christ had no sin. But God made him become sin. God did this for us so that in Christ we could become right with God.

The word of the Lord'

Thanks be to God

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32: (International Children's Bible) Mike Tickell

The issue between the pharisees and scribes was not that Jesus associated with the sinners or outsiders: Indeed that, they would have applauded. The point was rather, the order of things: what comes first repentance – becoming a pious insider – or loving the one who still has not seen the 'error of their ways'. Jesus put the loving first, rather than keeping it till after repentance: in other words, people matter most. Jesus clearly saw the inclusiveness of people as both theologically and ethically correct and psychologically valuable. Through being embraced, not demonized or ignored, people rebuild their lives. Instead of arguing from the tradition which only the knowledgeable could appreciate, Jesus starts his theological comment - that's what the parable is - with common daily experience and observation. This is a way of democratising religious tradition; making it accessible to all. In this context he turns to the story of the Prodigal - an example of dramatic generosity which re-embraces the younger son but which alienates the older brother.

15 Many tax collectors and “sinners” came to listen to Jesus. ² The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to complain: “Look! This man welcomes sinners and even eats with them!” ³ Then Jesus told them this story:

¹¹ “A man had two sons. ¹² The younger son said to his father, ‘Give me my share of the property.’ So the father divided the property between his two sons. ¹³ Then the younger son gathered up all that was his and left. He travelled far away to another country. There he wasted his money in foolish living. ¹⁴ He spent everything that he had. Soon after that, the land became very dry, and there was no rain. There was not enough food to eat anywhere in the country. The son was hungry and needed money. ¹⁵ So he got a job with one of the citizens there. The man sent the son into the fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ The

son was so hungry that he was willing to eat the food the pigs were eating. But no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ The son realized that he had been very foolish. He thought, 'All of my father's servants have plenty of food. But I am here, almost dying with hunger. ¹⁸ I will leave and return to my father. I'll say to him: Father, I have sinned against God and against you. ¹⁹ I am not good enough to be called your son. But let me be like one of your servants.' ²⁰ So the son left and went to his father.

"While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. He felt sorry for his son. So the father ran to him, and hugged and kissed him. ²¹ The son said, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am not good enough to be called your son.'^[b] ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Hurry! Bring the best clothes and put them on him. Also, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ And get our fat calf and kill it. Then we can have a feast and celebrate! ²⁴ My son was dead, but now he is alive again! He was lost, but now he is found!' So, they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "The older son was in the field. As he came closer to the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called to one of the servants and asked, 'What does all this mean?' ²⁷ The servant said, 'Your brother has come back. Your father killed the fat calf to eat because your brother came home safely!' ²⁸ The older son was angry and would not go in to the feast. So, his father went out and begged him to come in. ²⁹ The son said to his father, 'I have served you like a slave for many years! I have always obeyed your commands. But you never even killed a young goat for me to have a feast with my friends. ³⁰ But your other son has wasted all your money on prostitutes. Then he comes home, and you kill the fat calf for him!' ³¹ The father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me. All that I have is yours. ³² We had to celebrate and be happy because your brother was dead, but now he is alive. He was lost, but now he is found.'"

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Christ

Film Clip: A Story of Grace and Generosity – *Chocolat*

Yes, we have seen *Chocolat* many times, but as a story of social generosity, social redemption, it can hardly be surpassed. On Easter morning, the community finally gets it, as does a crusty form of religion, after reluctantly listening to and observing this strange woman,

Vianne, who has subverted their 'rules' and 'tradition' through the seduction of chocolate and grace. It begins with the priest, Pere Henri, then the mayor, the Comte de Reynaud, then the congregation and then the whole town: all are released (1.40.18 – 1.48.50).

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

Some thoughts... about family

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

Robyn Egarr

The one who prays ends each petition with the words, "May we wait, so to see more clearly". The response of the community, "So we may live more honestly".

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

Hymn: My Song is Love Unknown (TiS 341, Love Unknown, Samuel Crossman, vs 1-4 & 7)

Blessing

May we wait, seeing everything with new eyes,
 May we discern the spirits within us and among us
 And channel our desire for *Christ's* purposes

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ
Amen

Closing Musical Meditation: May the feet of God (TiS 779, Aubrey, Aubrey Podlich)

Closing Postlude

Organist:

Tony Ireland