



FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST SUNDAY, JULY 5TH, 2020

Beyond Rivalry



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Life is complicated; living life as a Christian is more so. It *is* today, and it *was* yesterday. As we continue journeying through the Gospel of Matthew through these winter and spring months, we discover the complex challenges that Matthew's community of faith faced: internal issues and relations beyond, with broader society. On the one hand, the challenge was to survive and build as a minority community while on the other, to build an ethos, an ethics consistent with Jesus' example. Neither sat easily with the other.

These last weeks since Trinity, we have heard some of that struggle. Matthew writes about the nature of Christian mission, as he draws upon and interprets the stories he has received about Jesus's own experiences. We have heard Matthew's reflections upon Jesus' sending out his own disciples in generosity. Manifestations of this new generosity are to be found in the accounts of Jesus' disciples "touching the untouchables", building relationships of love and solidarity beyond the clan or family, which is pretty much where relationships and ethics stopped in the ancient East. This building of a Christian ethics in a world that was hostile to it, led the Christian community to constantly ask the question: what is this God of our Jesus like? What would he do in our circumstances?

Today we continue the journey, as we address the essential difference between Jesus and John the Baptist's perception of God and the ethics that ensue. The difference is revealing and raises questions about the way we think about the ethical life.

GATHERING

Some Words of Gratitude

We Prepare

Confitemini Domino: Give Thanks to the Lord, for He is Good (Taizé)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nm0232sv47U&list=RDNm0232sv47U&start_radio=1

Welcome

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

The Lord be with you

And with you

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

The Peace

A Prayer Arising from the Idea of Hidden Things

The invitation must be accepted or else it has no value.

The flute is playing, the children are calling out:
"Why won't you come and dance"?

Here is the offer of life, filled with love and hope:
RSVP now!

Share fully in life:
Both its joys and its sorrows.
There is no other way.

The children can see the things
That the 'wise' refuse.

I see that you are weary.
Your burdens consume your life:

Come receive my rest.
 My yoke is easy:
 Blessed with purpose and with hope.

Come and learn from me!

LET'S HEAR THE WORD

Insights on Rivalry

“Our world is filled with competition, frenzied ambition in every domain. Each of us is acquainted with the spirit of competition. In Western nations, and above all in the United States, it animates not only economic and financial life, but scientific research and intellectual life as well. Despite the tension and the unrest it brings, these nations are inclined on the whole to congratulate themselves for having embraced the spirit of competition, for its positive effects are considerable. No one, or almost no one, any longer thinks of forgoing rivalry, since it allows us to go on dreaming of a still more glittering and prosperous future than the recent past.”

René Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*

We are not only acquisitively mimetic – that is we imitate each other in acquiring what we desire. We are also accusatively mimetic – that is, we band together to accuse one another. The first kind of mimesis seems to divide us (we fight over our desires), while the second, seems to unite us and bring peace, because we are all unified in desiring to do away with someone else.

James Alison

The only thing that will redeem human kind is cooperation

Bertrand Russell

Genesis 24: 34-38, 42-49, 58-67: The Story of Isaac and Rebekah's Meeting (Good News Translation)

David Turner

Genesis 24 contains a very important genealogy: the lineage of Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, is established as of Abraham's line. The story indicates that Abraham is determined that Isaac will not inter-marry with the Canaanites. This has to do with faith and politics. The Hebrews in worshipping Yahweh, worship

the God of the Exodus, the God of freedom, not Baal. Each God represents quite contrary theological and political projects. The story goes to great lengths to point out Rebekah's admirable qualities, fitting her for the role of one of Israel's great matriarchs. According to the story, the marriage between Rebekah and Isaac was quite monogamous, unlike those of Abraham and Jacob; a sign of God's approval and more historically, a reflection of Israel's distance from the cultural norms of the surrounding empires. While, in the story Rebekah is lauded for her good character, it is undeniable that she had a shadow side, as we find later, in her manipulative efforts to get Isaac's death bed blessings for her favoured son Isaac, over his older twin Esau (Genesis 27).

³⁴ "I am the servant of Abraham," he began. ³⁵ "The LORD has greatly blessed my master and made him a rich man. He has given him flocks of sheep and goats, cattle, silver, gold, male and female slaves, camels, and donkeys. ³⁶ Sarah, my master's wife, bore him a son when she was old, and my master has given everything he owns to him. ³⁷ My master made me promise with a vow to obey his command. He said, 'Do not choose a wife for my son from the young women in the land of Canaan. ³⁸ Instead, go to my father's people, to my relatives, and choose a wife for him.'

⁴² "When I came to the well today, I prayed, 'LORD, God of my master Abraham, please give me success in what I am doing. ⁴³ Here I am at the well. When a young woman comes out to get water, I will ask her to give me a drink of water from her jar. ⁴⁴ If she agrees and also offers to bring water for my camels, may she be the one that you have chosen as the wife for my master's son.' ⁴⁵ Before I had finished my silent prayer, Rebecca came with a water jar on her shoulder and went down to the well to get water. I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.' ⁴⁶ She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she watered the camels. ⁴⁷ I asked her, 'Who is your father?' And she answered, 'My father is Bethuel son of Nahor and Milcah.' Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms. ⁴⁸ I knelt down and worshipped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me straight to my master's relative, where I found his daughter for my master's son. ⁴⁹ Now, if you intend to fulfill your responsibility toward my master and treat him fairly, please tell me; if not, say so, and I will decide what to do."

⁵⁸ So they called Rebecca and asked, "Do you want to go with this man?"

“Yes,” she answered.

⁵⁹ So they let Rebecca and her old family servant go with Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰ And they gave Rebecca their blessing in these words:

“May you, sister, become the mother of millions!
May your descendants conquer the cities of their enemies!”

⁶¹ Then Rebecca and her young women got ready and mounted the camels to go with Abraham's servant, and they all started out.

⁶² Isaac had come into the wilderness of^[a] “The Well of the Living One Who Sees Me” and was staying in the southern part of Canaan. ⁶³ He went out in the early evening to take a walk in the fields and saw camels coming. ⁶⁴ When Rebecca saw Isaac, she got down from her camel ⁶⁵ and asked Abraham's servant, “Who is that man walking toward us in the field?”

“He is my master,” the servant answered. So, she took her scarf and covered her face.

⁶⁶ The servant told Isaac everything he had done. ⁶⁷ Then Isaac brought Rebecca into the tent that his mother Sarah had lived in, and she became his wife. Isaac loved Rebecca, and so he was comforted for the loss of his mother.

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Psalm 45: 10-17 (NRSV)

Caroline Turner

Psalm 45 appears to be a psalm for a royal wedding. The superscription lists it as a ‘love song’. For this reason, the lectionary compilers have included it here alongside the story of seeking a wife for Isaac. The focus on beauty is also consistent with the emphasis on Rebekah’s fairness and other qualities, as is the fact that the portion of the psalm set for today addresses the queen for the most part.

Verses 10-15, addressed to the queen, have several aspects which echo the Genesis passage. The queen has to leave her people and become part of her husband’s family (v. 10), the servant of Abraham has come bearing gifts (cf. v.12), and the queen is a virgin (v. 14).

It may seem out of place to modern ears to concentrate in a psalm on the beauty of two human individuals, even royal ones. We are so used to beauty

being exploited in cheap ways within our world with its advertising and the pursuit of celebrity status. But we ought to be mindful in reading the psalm that the beauty of the king and his bride ultimately point back to a divine beauty beyond description. Moreover, that beauty is not just defined by physical appearance but relates to equity, righteousness, joy or gladness, truth and wisdom. In such company beauty is both redefined and understood afresh.

¹⁰Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house,

¹¹*and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him;*

¹²the people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people

¹³*with all kinds of wealth. The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes;*

¹⁴in many-colored robes she is led to the king; behind her the virgins, her companions, follow.

¹⁵*With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.*

¹⁶In the place of ancestors you, O king, shall have sons; you will make them princes in all the earth.

¹⁷*I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations; therefore, the peoples will praise you forever and ever.*

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30 (The Good News Translation)

Caroline Turner

This reading really deals with the character or spirit of Christian faith. Its beginning point is the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus, and more importantly, the way of John and the way of Jesus. The essence of John's path was one of condemnation of the injustices that prevailed in Hebrew society: in particular his denunciation of the powerful social and economic strata of his day. For John, the kingdom of God would finally break in by God evening the score. Jesus, on the other hand while looking forward to the kingdom, does it very differently

¹⁶“Now, to what can I compare the people of this day? They are like children sitting in the marketplace. One group shouts to the

other, ¹⁷ 'We played wedding music for you, but you wouldn't dance! We sang funeral songs, but you wouldn't cry!' ¹⁸ When John came, he fasted and drank no wine, and everyone said, 'He has a demon in him!' ¹⁹ When the Son of Man came, he ate and drank, and everyone said, 'Look at this man! He is a glutton and wine drinker, a friend of tax collectors and other outcasts!' God's wisdom, however, is shown to be true by its results."

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "Father, Lord of heaven and earth! I thank you because you have shown to the unlearned what you have hidden from the wise and learned. ²⁶ Yes, Father, this was how you were pleased to have it happen.

²⁷ "My Father has given me all things. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. ³⁰ For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light."

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Hymn: Father in heaven (TiS 465, Halad, Filippino Folk Melody, DT Niles): A Piece to Meditate Upon

Some thoughts.... Copying whom?

Let's Give: Our Offerings

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

The Sacrament

For the foreseeable future, we will be celebrating the eucharist in “one kind”, which means that while the wine, bread and wafers will be consecrated, the community for safety’s sake, will be receiving the wafer alone. This along with the eucharist in “two kinds” – the usual practice – nevertheless, stands within the mainstream tradition of the Christian Church.

Hymn: In Christ alone my hope is found

“In Christ alone my hope is found;
 He is my light, my strength, my song;
 This cornerstone, this solid ground,
 Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
 What heights of love, what depths of peace,
 When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
 My comforter, my all in all—
 Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
 Fullness of God in helpless babe!
 This gift of love and righteousness,
 Scorned by the ones He came to save.
 Till on that cross as Jesus died,
 The wrath of God was satisfied;
 For ev’ry sin on Him was laid—
 Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
 Light of the world by darkness slain;
 Then bursting forth in glorious day,
 Up from the grave He rose again!
 And as He stands in victory,
 Sin’s curse has lost its grip on me;
 For I am His and He is mine—
 Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
 This is the pow’r of Christ in me;
 From life’s first cry to final breath,
 Jesus commands my destiny.

No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
 Can ever pluck me from His hand;
 Till He returns or calls me home—
 Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand."

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 KINGSWAY THANKYOU MUSIC

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you
And also with you

Let us lift up our hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours

Our Lord and God,

For you alone are worthy.

In time beyond our dreaming,

You brought forth light out of darkness,

And in the love of Christ your Son,

You set women and men at the heart of your creation.

And so we praise you,

with the faithful of every time and place,

joining with the choirs of angels and the whole creation

in the eternal hymn

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth

are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest

Through him,
in him
and because of him,
We affirm the Church's faith

***Christ has died.
Christ has risen.
Christ will come again.***

Institution

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.***

Breaking of the Bread

Christ is the bread of joy
Who shares food with sinners.

Christ is the cup of life,

Who revives the faint-hearted.

Let us receive what we are;
Let us become what we receive.

Lamb of God

Jesus, Wisdom of God,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Word made flesh,
have mercy on us

Jesus, Liberator of creation,
grant us peace.

Communion

Distribution

Prayer after Communion

Blessed be God who calls us together
Praise to God who makes us one people

Blessed be God who has forgiven our sin
Praise to God who gives us hope and freedom

Blessed be God whose word is proclaimed
Praise to God who is revealed as lover

Blessed be God who alone has called us
We offer all that we are and all we shall become

Prayers of the People

Ross Lorenz

At the end of each prayer/petition with the words, ***Lord Christ, hear our prayers***
we say ***help us to imitate you***

**Closing Hymn: Come thou long expected Jesus (TiS 272,
Stuttgart, C. Wesley)**

Blessing and Sending Out

The blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
Be upon you and remain with you always

Our service has ended.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ

**We hum twice: Shalom to you (TiS 778, Somos del Señor, Elise
Shoemaker Eslinger)**

Musical Postlude

Pianist:

Rosemary Osborne