

Traditional Home service

Sunday 30th Jan

OPENING PRAYER

God our creator, who in the beginning commanded the light to shine out of darkness: we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, shine into the hearts of all your people, and reveal the knowledge of your glory in the face of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

O King enthroned on high, filling the earth with your glory: holy is your name, Lord God almighty. In our sinfulness we cry to you to take our guilt away, and to cleanse our lips to speak your word, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*I, the Lord of Sea and Sky*)

READINGS - 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
John 21:15-19

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*O God, our help in ages past*)

CONCLUSION

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in deepest sin
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them,
Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

1 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home:

2 Under the shadow of your throne
your saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is your arm alone,
and our defence is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received its frame,
from everlasting you are God,
to endless years the same.

4 A thousand ages in your sight
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
soon bears us all away;
we fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
still be our guard while troubles last,
and our eternal home!

Sermon - Adrian Morton
1 Cor 13:1-13; John 21:15-19
Unity Part 2 - Kingdom confrontation

I want to pick up on last week's talk about unity.
If you were here last Sunday or watched the live stream of Wollaston's service.

You will know that I was talking about how we create a safe space for people to flourish.

And I talked about a core value that God has given us, which is free will, freedom.

That His kingdom is a kingdom of freedom.
And the purpose of our freedom is to love well.

A love described in our 1 Corinthians reading.

And again, just to remind us, I said last week that if we are to create a safe place for people to discover who they are and why they are here.

Then there are 3 areas to tackle.

Firstly that we deal well with our differences.
So we cultivate honour amongst us.
That we value, respect the other even though they are different from us.

Secondly, our attitude to sin is shaped by new covenant thinking.
So its not about judgment or rule breaking or punishment.
But we want to call people to live in their higher identity of who they are in Christ.

And in the responsibility of being children of light..

And thirdly, I touched on confronting conflict.
Its an acknowledgement that if there are high levels of freedom amongst us then that will naturally generate high levels of conflict.

And its this third area I want to speak on again today.

How do we deal with conflict, upset, that naturally arises from us sharing life together, because we are all different.

And also, if we are to allow sin to rise up to the surface.

And for it to be seen for what it is...

How do we then walk with someone through the process of living in increased levels of freedom.

Freedom from those things that entangle us.

And if we are to do both those things well.
Dealing with conflict and walking with someone through the process of being free from sin...

Then I think we'll have to learn how to confront one another in a kingdom, or a new covenant way.

Having the freedom to confront one another is essential for building a safe place for people to discover who they are and why they are here.

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God isn't a God who wants to control us.
He wants us to learn how to use our freedom well.

So in this new covenant, where we are to walk by the Spirit.
He hasn't given us a set of rules in order to control our behaviour.

So the need to control others can't be reflected in our church environment.

But often it can feel just like that.

That the church environment has this set of rules, to keep us all conformed to a certain level of behaviour.

The comment, "That's not how we do things here", reveals a controlling environment like that.

But God doesn't want to control us.
He wants us to be free.

And to use our freedom to love people well.

Look at how Jesus operated.
He valued people's freedom hugely.

He would teach, some would be attracted to his message.

Others really wouldn't.

And he would just let people leave. If they chose to.

He would ask people, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Why, because he valued someone's freedom.

So when it comes to kingdom confrontation we can't approach it wanting to control the other person.

We can't even approach confrontation wanting to change their behaviour.

Paul in Galatians says this:

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh ; rather, serve one another humbly in love.... So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Our success in using our freedom to love comes down to walking by the Spirit.

So in any confrontation we must address how a person is walking by the Spirit, rather than simply their behaviour.

Or in other words, we need to see past the behaviour to understand what is going on in the spirit of a person.

What are the goals of any confrontation?

In the first place, its about bringing something to the light.

What is the truth of the situation here?

It's helping someone see what they might not see for themselves.

It's helping someone see how they are affecting the world around them.

Its helping someone see the mess they have created.

Maybe the relationships they have damaged.

Its encouraging them to use their freedom to take responsibility and clean up the mess.

Which only they can probably do.

Its to bring to the surface what people forget about themselves after they have failed.

Because when we mess up, its easy to forget who we are.

Its easy to forget that we are still a beloved child of God.

A friend of Jesus, redeemed, justified, forgiven...

Its about calling out the greatness in someone.

We are still children of the light even when we fail.

If the goal of confrontation becomes about judgment, or punishment or keeping people in shame.

Then we will disempower people.

Whereas we want to empower people to use their freedom to walk by the Spirit.

Another goal of a confrontation is to apply internal pressure to reveal what is broken.

<I don't know whether you used to fix a punctured bicycle tyre? In the days I did that for my children, I would pump up the inner tube to a great pressure, stick the tube in water, and watch for the bubbles to appear. What was happening? I was creating internal pressure in order to reveal a broken spot?

The process only worked if I filled the inner tube with enough internal pressure.

External pressure will never easily expose someone's "broken spot".

Yelling at them, threatening them with punishment, interrogating them won't be a great help.

The purpose of creating pressure is to find truth.

Its not to get a confession.

Isaiah 1:18 says, "Come now let us reason together. Though your sins be like scarlet..."

Though your sins are blatantly all over the place, God says, "We can do something about that."

There is Hope.

"Come, let us reason together."
The desire of God is that we come.
The Lord invites us to mutually look at something to correct it.

God doesn't need to control us.
And He is not afraid of our broken spots.

He knows that the only way we can truly change is when we are free to change.

And our ultimate goal is to help them choose to use their freedom to love well.

How do we go about confrontation?

Paul a little later in Galatians 6 says this:

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

He is giving instructions for what to do when any of us happen to cross paths with someone who has fallen into a hole.

He says, "you who are spiritual..."
Those who know and display the love and character of God.
He's just listed the fruit of the Spirit.

And he says those who are spiritual are to handle such situations in a "spirit of gentleness".

It describes a heart attitude.
Gentleness doesn't mean nice and it doesn't mean polite.

At the heart of gentleness are the beliefs that:

"I'm not here to judge you."
"I don't need to control you."
"I'm here to walk with you so you can experience increased levels of freedom."

Look how Jesus did it.
Jesus was the great confronter!

He was neither afraid in the presence of people's mistakes.

Nor was He afraid to confront people with a loving invasion of the truth.

The reading we had from John is great reading.

Peter had messed up.
He had denied knowing Jesus 3 times before the cock crowed.

How did Jesus confront Peter?

Well, what he didn't do is this...
Peter, I hope you feel ashamed for what you did. Where is your commitment to me? You need to take a break from ministry for 6 months before I will restore you.

He asked Peter some questions. Do you love me?

Asking pertinent questions will help hugely.

But he asked questions in order to create internal pressure for Peter.

He was encouraging Peter to examine His own heart.
What was really going on?

He was giving Peter freedom to take responsibility for his actions.

What if Peter had said, 'actually, I don't think I love you enough.'
Church history would have been different!

He was also calling out Peter's greatness...
"Feed my lambs"
"Take care of my sheep"

This is who you are and what I've called you to.

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We do also need strong boundaries.
What if someone just isn't repentant.

What if they don't want to engage with the process.
Are not interested in using their freedom to love others well.

Or worse, they are intentionally trying to cause upset, discord, trouble..

Then I think we need to have strong boundaries in place.

Matthew 18 says, *“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”*

I think in the past we have interpreted this passage something like:

We go to someone, tell them how they broken our rules, and they need to be punished. If they don't agree with us, and with others.. we throw them out of the church.

Actually, I've never seen this passage worked out in a church environment.

But this passage describes a process to go through.

And I think we can reconcile Paul's instruction in Galatians, i.e.

if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.

with this passage.

After going through the process, and a person is un-repentant, refuses to listen, or worse, is actively engaged in causing trouble.

Then we can say, 'maybe this isn't the right church community for you.'

We are trying to build a safe place for people to be free to love one another.

You don't share that vision... please leave....

Finally, it will take courage to confront someone.

And everyone is confront-able.

Interestingly, Abraham confronted God in Genesis 18.

I won't dwell on it except to say go read it.

It describes two friends, Abraham and God having a conversation about the fate of a city.

Suffice to say if God is confront-able then anyone is!

But it does take courage.

The temptation is to ignore conflict because we are afraid of confrontation.

Or we allow others to manipulate or control us.

Thereby, reducing our freedom.

Neither of those options is great. Because neither will build trust.

And in the end trust is a key ingredient.

If you trust that I have your best interest at heart, then we will be able to build a deeper covenant relationship through confrontation.

And our church environment will increasingly become a safe place for people to express their freedom through love.

And for people to discover who they are and why they are here.

Amen.

