

Sunday 3rd March 2024

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

Introduction (fair and unfair)

There are many things which we label unfair in the world but when we say something is unfair what do we mean? Perhaps it is a personal thing, we feel we have been treated differently or badly, or perhaps it is a situation in the community or the world which results in people being treated differently or badly. Whichever it is there is always a subjective element.

Take a moment to reflect upon the things which you think are unfair.

Remember that no matter what happens God is with us.

Reading John 2:13 - 22 ([The Voice](#))

Reflection

The temple was the beating heart of Judaism. It wasn't just a church on the street corner it was the centre of worship, music, politics, society, national celebration and mourning.

Above all else, it was the place where Israel's God had promised to live in the midst of his people.

The temple was in Jerusalem and for Passover everyone came to Jerusalem, many like Jesus walking for a week or more, and few would carry their sacrifice. Instead they would purchase it when they got there, hence the sheep, cows, pigeons etc. This is where we recognise something unfair is happening. People have no choice and they are being charged too much. We call it captive audience syndrome, and many of us have paid over the odds for a t-shirt we could only buy at the concert.

Now the thing was, all sacrificial animals had to be temple certified so you either bought them at the temple or you had to pay to have your animal certified. On top of that you had to pay a temple tax, and whilst many currencies were in use around Jerusalem, things in the temple had to be paid in temple money, hence the moneychangers, a bit like when you go abroad on holiday and have to buy the currency of the country. You can see how difficult it could be for the average person you get sorted for the Passover, and into all this came Jesus, chasing out the animals and scattering the money everywhere as he turned over the tables. What are you doing to my Father's house, why are making it so difficult?

Jesus showed that the way things were being done was not fair and the opposite of the way the Kingdom should be.

Reading 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 ([The Message](#))

Reflection

Paul, writing to the church in Corinth, a mixed church of Christians, some of whom were Jewish and some who were not, has something on his mind. How do you overcome the notion that the message of Jesus is foolishness? He is aware that to many on the outside the message has been undermined by the crucifixion of Jesus, for the Jews where was the miracle when it was needed, and for the Greeks where is the wisdom in killing off the leader of the revolution?

In our generation we are very aware that people such as Richard Dawkins have spent much thought and energy in their effort to declare belief in God foolish, a delusion even, however, often their definition of God is not a God I recognise. It is a picture of God built upon out of context excerpts from Scripture, together with a vague memory of God informed by school assemblies or early years church attendance and often compounded by church doctrine, misunderstood or otherwise. Nothing much has really changed since Paul's time really.

Paul reminds his readers that God has not elevated the great and good, the wise and the mighty. He has called the ordinary people of the world, the fishermen, the tax collectors and the outcasts, the Marys and Marthas, to recognise his presence with them, and through the power of love to change the world. The wisdom of the world is, says Paul, foolishness in comparison to God's wisdom, and worldly strength is weak in the face of the power of God's love. The wisdom we learn through the way of Jesus is that our worldly skills and talents mean nothing if not used for the benefit of all, but in sharing those gifts we bring a whole new perspective to the understanding of wealth, power and status.

There are many people who believe that money will bring them happiness only to discover they are lonely and in some way lost. There was a man called Howard Hughes, an American who was very good looking and everyone wanted to know him. He owned an airline and hotels and eventually became the richest man in the world but he also became afraid, and hid himself away in dark hotel rooms with no windows, He grew a beard, a very long beard, and did not bother to cut his nails, and they became very long. He was the opposite of who he had been and very lonely. He did not eat properly so he lost weight and only had the energy to sit in his room watching films all day and night. He became afraid of germs and eventually died at 67 from a condition which could have been treated by a device one of his own companies developed but no one knew he was ill. He was wealthy, intelligent, powerful and famous and yet it did not bring him happiness.

There are thousands of people who become wealthy and find it a lonely experience or lose their money by trying to buy happiness. The message of Jesus is that we need each other, and if we share what we have with others we will find a joy that has nothing to do with money and everything to do with love. If we live as one with each other we will know God in a new and exciting way, a God that others could believe in, the God of creation, the God that is love. There is a huge difference between the wisdom of the world and God's wisdom, the perception that you need money to be happy is foolishness in the face of oneness and when we realise our interdependence then a whole new way of wisdom opens up before us.

Story [All I see is part of me](#)

Surprising God, you constantly seek to transform us
shaking us out of our complacency,
waking us to new ideas,
breaking down our preconceived notions.

Using the unusual, the unlikely, the unexpected
you offer us the opportunity to wonder,
but we prefer the usual, doubt the unlikely
and reject the unexpected.

Rainbow God, open our eyes anew
to the colour and variety of your creation,

Peel back the layers of grey
in which we have carefully clothed your revelation
thinking we have the answers,
predicting your action,
and lovingly placing you in a box marked GOD.

Rock us with your majesty, your miracles
and the momentous mosaic that is your creation.

Instil in us a sense of expectation,
helping us to see you without boundaries,
fresh and new;
reflecting your glory in our excitement.

Shock us with your transfiguration
in the everyday face of a neighbour or stranger.

Extraordinary, extravagant, exuberant God,
surprise us!

Heather Whyte 2004