



Sermon

Sunday 24th September 2023

Ex 16.2-15, Ps 105

The Reconciliation of the World to God by the death of Christ

Driving around by taxi in Bali last week the first thing that the taxi drivers tell you to do while in Bali is to go and visit the local temple. It struck me, when was the last time you got into a taxi in Australia and the first thing the driver told you to do was to go and visit the local church?

[Pause for a response and a laugh]

On the evening before my trip to Bali, where Lucy and I celebrated our 20 year wedding anniversary, I bumped into Louise Hattam here at St Peter's. She told me how lovely the Balinese people are, and that they are very religious. Having been there myself now, I see that the Balinese people are lovely, *because* they are religious. The local Balinese people are there to remind us of our history. Of world history. Where religion is there to bring meaning to the world. To provide a common basis for society. To provide a legitimate basis for the exercise of leadership on behalf of society. In their service of the

common good, in the interests of all the people under their charge, and not of any particular individual or group. In their service of the goal of social unity, based on religious unity. In the service of the hope of all people, for eternal life, beyond this life, based on what is done, and what is not done, in our life in this world.

For nearly two millennia, the political life of modern western society was characterised by the distinctly Christian religious understanding of the human race. That distinctly Christian understanding of the human race, is that the human race has been reconciled to God in Jesus Christ. The Christian understanding of the human race, has illuminated our self-understanding as human beings in the world. Reconciled to God, in Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to all who are related to him in the same way. Our relationship with God, the martyrs showed us, was stronger than our relationship with the state. A lesson they taught is, with their lives.

For nearly two millennia, the freedom of the individual Christian in their relationship with God, the freedom of the Christian people in their relationship with God, has been the basis of a social order of justice and peace within western society, corresponding to the kingdom of God, because our relationship with God, as the one people of God, with the one God of all people, has been to effectively limit and to restrain the power of the state, the power of the political order, the rule of human beings, sinful from their birth, over every

other human being, so that the dignity, and the principle, of the eternal value of the individual, of every individual, whether Christian, or non-Christian, whether western, or non-western by birth, whether male or female, whether of noble, or humble birth. We are all equal before God. We are all equal before the law. We are all equal before the law of God. We will all be judged by the same God, and by the same law. That bestows upon every individual human being, the same rights, and the same responsibilities, as every other human being. We will all stand before the same judge, at the end of the day. Beyond the many false prophets and teachers, judges and judgments, beyond every this worldly doctrine of salvation, reconciliation, or redemption, that beset our modern western society today. That are there, as they were there in the early church, to woo away, from the true Messiah. From the truth, about God, about Christ, and about our common human nature, as human beings, in this world.

As we make our way now, out of slavery in Egypt, out of the land of Pharaoh, out of the hand of our taskmasters –

as we make our way now, as God's people together, into the promised land, into a land flowing with milk and honey -

We are called to remember,

The God who liberated us from captivity.

The God who set us free.

The God we must worship and serve.

All the days of our lives.

As we make our way now, through the wilderness, and into the promised land, of the future of the kingdom of God.

Let us remember,

The Lord himself is with us.

The Lord has heard our complaining.

Our complaining that is against the Lord, and not against one another – for what are we?

‘When the, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him – what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord.’

‘Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining. And the glory of the Lord has appeared here in the Eucharist. And is word to

us is this, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’

Last night you ate your fill of meat, and this morning there was a layer of dew on the grass. Now the layers of dew have lifted, there is the bread of the holy sacrament. When you see it, you say to one another, ‘What is it?’ For we did not know what it is.

‘It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.’

In Jimbarin, a coastal resort on the western coast of Bali, the second thing the taxi drivers tell you to do, after going to the temple, is to go to the beach in the evening to watch the sunset. Now, like you, I’ve been many a time to a beach in the evening to watch the sunset.

However, I’m not sure I’ve ever seen anything quite like this.

Stepping on to Jimbarin Beach in the evening is like stepping into an amphitheatre – an open air place for viewing.

It runs, as far as the eye can see, in both directions, to the north and to the south. The entire, vast beach, faces west.

Sloping down, like a theatre, to the ocean, the beach exists, it seems, for sunset. Like the theatre does a play, or the cinema a movie.

For the sun to die in a blaze of glory.

Bringing peace to every human heart.

As the Son of God died in a blaze of glory.

To bring peace to every human heart.

‘Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord’.

Martin Luther King said.

And his vision of a colourblind society stands today.

In the Old Testament, the temple in Jerusalem held profound, and powerful, symbolic meaning.

As a symbol of the world, as the symbol of sacrifice, and as a symbol of reconciliation with God, and on this basis of reconciled relationship with God, reconciliation with every other human being who is related to God in the same way, the temple was a symbol of the Old Testament itself, and of the Jewish people.

As prophecy, of the coming Messiah, at whose hand, God himself would come to reign, over all things, in heaven and on earth.

And under whose hand God himself would act, to reconcile all things, in heaven and on earth, to himself.

In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Messiah, the Christ. The Son of God.

In Jesus Christ, and in him crucified, God has established his own reign, over all things, in heaven and on earth.

At his hand, God himself is acting to reconcile all things, in heaven and on earth, to himself.

The reconciliation of the entire universe to God, in Jesus Christ, and in him crucified.

That is the Christian meaning of reconciliation.

The Christian ministry of reconciliation.

The Christian ministry of reconciliation, that is the ministry of Christ, and of the Apostles.

The Christian ministry by which God is reconciling the world to himself.

In Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name

Make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises to him;

Tell of all his wonderful works.

Glory in his holy name;

Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice

Seek the Lord and his strength;

Seek his presence continually;

Remember the wonderful works he has done,

His miracles, and the judgments he has uttered.

O offspring of his servant Abraham,

Children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

He is the Lord our God;

His judgements are in all the earth.

He is mindful of his covenant forever,

Of the word that he commanded,

For a thousand generations,

The covenant that he made with Abraham,

His sworn promise to Isaac,

Which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
Saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan
As your portion for an inheritance.

When they were few in number,
Of little account, and strangers in it,
Wandering from nation to nation,
From one kingdom to another people,
He allowed no one to oppress them;
He rebuked kings on their account,
Saying, 'Do not touch my anointed ones;
Do my prophets no harm.'

So he brought his people out with joy,
His chosen ones with singing.
He gave them the lands of the nations,
And they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,
That they might keep his statutes and observe his laws.
Praise the Lord!