

Sermon Archive 193

Thursday 29 March, 2018

Knox Church, Christchurch

Lesson: 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



KNOX CHURCH

love faith outreach community justice

Reflection: I also hand on to you . . .

Giving to you what I have received from God. Giving to you what I have received . . .

Ah, my friend; because they'll hear me saying this from thousands of years later, I know they're going to hear it wrong. Their minds are going to go straight to thoughts about handing down a tradition - what we have received. It'll conjure up for them thoughts about the writing down of stories that until then had only ever been "word of mouth" - free, flexible. They'll think about the giving of durability, stability, orthodoxy to the story. Instruction, reportage, preservation. And if we quiz them on why we do this (give what we've received), they'll say it's about accuracy, authority - keeping the record right.

But that's not why **he** did it - gave to the people what he'd received from God. He didn't do it for the sake of **it**. He did it for the sake of **them**. "Having loved them, he loved them to the end." Yes, my friend, it's love; he did it not for **it**; he did it for **them**.

I don't know that they realised that whenever he called them to the table. He called to tables often - the table's just what people do. They do it because they're biological - they need fuel in the tank, drink and food. And so, dietary patterns: come to the table for three square meals a day. Don't you go skipping breakfast! And if you can't have your main meal at lunch time, don't eat heavily after ten at night. It's something to do with health or science or metabolic rate. And there's the food marketing too - Jamie, Rick and Nadia showing us how to plate up better - until others too just need to buy the book. And the politics! Kiwi sheep and beef

contributing to 28% of our total carbon emissions. Energy drinks - to tax or not to tax. And, by the way, what's Krusty Crème doing in South Auckland. And what's McDonalds doing, flipping its golden arches to form a "me-too" feminist "W"? Market power, media profile, science, health and funding. Positioning our diet in the zeit-geist - much ado about food. It's all about the food.

Some of God's creatures have no food. Some of them have donned the skeleton, all ribs and eyes. Yet, if God has given us food, ought not the food be handed on? I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you. It's not about tradition. It's about **them**. "Having loved them, he loved them to the end." It's about love for them. Feed them!

-ooOoo-

Changing gear: I received from the Lord, what I also handed on to you. Receiving, giving, he called them to the table, my friend. Come to the table, **people**. Tell me about your day. There's company here; here we can meet, and talk. As the daily bread is shared, we can chew the greater fat. You can be you, I can be me; together we'll be who we are - and maybe we'll love one another.

It's funny, friend. At the start of it all, as he came up out of the waters, he said he heard a voice. It was telling him who he was - the child of a parent - someone held within the love of another. It assured him that he lived within a pride, a love, a pledge of another. He lived in the presence of the befriending Spirit. He wasn't a lost little dot in a big wide world - a drifting monad. He was a creature in company. Even in his desert time, his time of testing, it felt for him like there were ministering angels around about him. Never alone! How would you put it? That he was surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses? A branch within a vine? Identity found for the person, within the company of people.

Well **they** worked hard on that "social formation of identity" thing. They talked about national identity, and cultural formation. They talked about social contract and structures of responsibility. They put regulation, legislation, expectation around our living together.

And when they got clever and computerised, they even set up virtual communities - to keep everyone constantly connected.

Well, friend, despite all that, some of God's socially-defined creatures are lonely. Some find the structures of connection presenting them with bullying. Some just find, despite the technology, that the phone never rings, the neighbours aren't home.

But if God has given us company at the table (dignifying, helping company), ought not the company be shared? I received from the Lord what now I hand on to you. It's not about the structures we build or the theories of identity we write. It's about **them** - the lonely. "Having loved them, he loved them to the end." He gives, he hands on, because he loves. It's about love for them.

-ooOoo-

I received from the Lord, what I also handed on to you. As he calls them to the table, my friend, what else is given? This time, it's a little bit strange. He gives them a memory. He tells them to take a snapshot of this time.

- Remember this!
- Remember now!
- Remember me! You are creatures of memory.

And it's true - although sometimes they forget - forget history and so are doomed to repeat it. But normally they remember. Not just remember how to get home, but also remember getting lost. Not just remember how to bless, but also remember when they cursed. Not just remember how to kiss, but also remembering the turning away. They have consciences, and there's much to remember. So this night Jesus says "remember this. Remember that one day someone came among you, and gave you good things. Remember that he was with you, not because of **it** - but because of **you**. You! Remember, with the glorious immoveable grammar of the passive perfect past, that

you have been loved. When the tables are overturned, when the food isn't there anymore, when the company has been chased away into the night, remember me. You have been loved. I, who have been loved, received from the Lord what I also handed on to you. **You** have been loved. "Having loved them, he loved them to the end." He gives, he hands on, because he is loved and loves. It's the economy of, the transmission of, the handing on of, love for them.

-ooOoo-

I received from the Lord, what I also handed on to you. As one last time he calls them to the table - a last calling, a last supper, a last time, what else is given, received? The apostle's words continue: "For I received from the Lord, what I also handed on to you. That the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them."

At the table, the people are given a word - "betrayal". They are told that this is a Christ who feeds even those who reject him. Food for the people. Food for the hungry. Food for the lonely. Food for the saddled with memory. Food for the betrayers. He gives not for the sake of the story. He gives it in love for the people - all the people.

-ooOoo-

Well, my friend, there it is. It's getting dark. The night has come. Who knows what will happen now. But a word has come to us - of giving and receiving, of doing it all in love. What I received from the Lord, so also I hand on to you. The table is set. The story's unfolding. Receiving and handing on. The generous legacy of love.

We keep a moment of quiet.