

Sermon Archive 338

Sunday 4 April, 2021

Knox Church, Otautahi, Christchurch

Lesson: Acts 2: 22-28

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



Easter Day

Sunday 7 March - Jesus goes to a place where the people are meant to be able to pray, and finds it cluttered with those intent on exploiting the people. Greed has pushed in, and the people's wait has stretched out into "never". Making a whip of cords, and driving out the corruption, we know his fate is sealed. Greed is going to pick up its violence.

Sunday 21 March - Jesus speaks to us about a seed dying, falling into the earth that fruit may come forth. He talks about the pain of love being rejected, and we wonder if a time will ever come when we'll have the courage to love again - love as Christ loves us.

Sunday 28 March - holding within him the tender image of God (who is creative, loving, giving of self, who always tries to mend what is broken) he enters the city to the welcome of the people. And we wonder what it would be like to live in a world where the nurturing of our true selves, our God-expressive selves was the norm. Yet also we commit to God the creeping realization that soon the welcome for Jesus will be withdrawn. How fragile are the hopes that love might reign!

Then Friday 2 April. A beautiful tree is turned into a cross. A creative carpenter is turned into a manufacturer of torture devices. A free and beautiful Jesus is turned into a crucified criminal. "Something is wrong, O God" we cried.

And something **was** wrong. Can corruption be defeated? Can we love again? Can the image within us of a God of love be restored? Can the wrong be made right? Well, it would take something massive to right the wrong - some new death-defiant deed of creation and life.

-ooOoo-

Morning follows night - peach-coloured clouds painted on the dawn. Days, then weeks, then a month and a bit. Someone called Peter sees a crowd before him, and knows it is time to give an account. Why is he here? Why hadn't he just gone home? Where to start expressing his heart?

He starts at the beginning. He had met Jesus some years ago. Struggling to catch a single fish, while his family's welfare depended on him catching a full net's worth, he'd come home defeated. This guy who'd grown up nowhere near any water tells him to go out again, and fish in a slightly different place (or maybe slightly different way - does one fish with the heart - never mind). He goes out again and fish just thrown themselves into the nets. Hardly a deed of power, a wonder, a godly sign; but it **was** enough to grab his attention. So he followed this small man from Nazareth, while others came along - just to see.

In what would turn out to be about half-way through the journey (although, actually, what is half way through eternity?), Peter found himself articulating a mystery. "You are the Christ" he said, "the Son of the living God". What a thing to say! As Jesus replied, the saying was a gift from God. This **was** the season of gifts from God. Insight, healing, the feeding of the people. An authority unlike the official authorities - deep as faith, hope, love. Faith hope and love - would they, as some later journeyman claim, abide?

Sadly not. The institution objected and flexed. The covenant written on the heart was rejected by the heart. The sacred image implanted was migrated out. The tree was distorted into a cross - for carrying, for stumbling under, for taking nails, and taking life.

Peter names it all. He says to this crowd before him "you knew he was from God. It was obvious he was full of God. And you handed him over, into the unclean hands, of those with blood on their hands - to be crucified and killed.

We don't know whether Peter gave his account with anger or judgment. Or calmly and plainly. We only have some words. But the words relate that

strange state of affairs where the One clearly from God, clearly was rejected by those who knew better, and clearly was killed. And in the light of all this clarity, we pondered. Why does the institution do this - why do the nations so furiously rage together? Why does the world so bitterly love? Can we love again? Why does "Hosanna" so quickly turn to "away with him"? Why does a maker of dining room tables and chairs become so easily the manufacturer of electric chairs and injection gurneys? Peter puts the reality out there for the people to acknowledge - and **that part** the people know is true.

"But", says Peter, to his gathering crowd (perhaps also to **this** gathered crowd), "God raised him up, having freed him from death, for it was impossible for him to be held in its power. *(I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence. [Acts 2: 25-28])*

Following the first Easter, this is how Peter gives account of the faith within him. He stands as a person of faith, because even though the world crucifies Jesus, God calls forth the living Christ. Even though the journey appeared to end at the tomb, the new creation begins with the rolling away of a stone. Peter stands because he, and the people around him have been enabled to say "He is risen; he is risen indeed."

The world, in response, has said "this makes no sense; this sort of thing doesn't happen; it's impossible".

Peter claims that something **else** is impossible. Impossible is that death should hold him. Why impossible? Impossible because love, as loved by God, does not let go. Why would God try again? Is it that the love has not gone away? Love has **not** gone away - and love seeks to make things right. Love seeks to restore what ought never to have been killed. You people of God, bearers of the image of God, listen to what Peter has to say: life puts

right what death put wrong. Easter puts right what Lent put wrong.
Sunday puts right what Friday put wrong. Love puts right what death put
wrong.

What death put wrong, Love puts right.

A blessed Easter to you all.

We keep a moment of gladness and quiet.

The Knox Church website is at: <http://www.knoxchurch.co.nz.html> . Sermons are to be
found under News / Sermons.