

July 18, 2021 8th Sunday after Pentecost - Sermon

2 Samuel 7:1-14a; Psalm 89:20-37; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34,53-56

Mending Something Broken

One of my favourite musical artists is a singer/songwriter named Michael Card. In one of his songs that I first heard over 30 years ago he introduced me to the idea that God dreamed prior to creating the universe. I remember finding the imagery intriguing. The idea that the Creator imagined what the Creation would be before saying 'let there be light' seemed to make a good deal of sense. We see this method of creating in our own lesser attempts. A potter at the wheel sees in his or her mind the finished vessel even before the clay is thrown on the wheel. When the vessel is completed the potter declares that it is good. A dressmaker has a vision of the finished product which influences the choice of fabric and colours and when the dress is complete it is declared to be good. A carpenter has an idea before the first saw cut is made and when that cut is made well it is declared to be good. The beautiful created order that we see around us had its origin in the dreams of the Creator and it was woven into the wonder we see. Even the gift of bringing humanity into the picture, created in God's image and having dominion over the created order, was declared to be 'very good' in the eyes of the Creator. Unfortunately the dream that God had, which resulted in the beautiful Creation, was marred by disobedience. The creatures to whom God had given dominion over everything were tempted to stray from the way in which God wished for them to exercise their dominion and paradise was removed from their grasp. The turmoil and pain that exists in the world is largely due to the descendants of those first guardians doing the same kind of thing. The way in which God wanted his Creation to be managed is often ignored and as a result there is a good deal of pain, brokenness, and loss. What God chose to do about this is found in the story of a particular family who were chosen by God to bring a solution into the world. This family's story had its climax in the ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, God's Messiah. The story continues into our day and the effects of that solution are seen in a variety of different ways.

When Abraham answered God's call a chain of events was launched which was meant to bring healing and wholeness back into the Created order. Each step required obedience from the chosen ones and the guardianship granted to humanity was never taken away. Within the events following the Covenant made between Abraham and God was the arrival of Jesus into the divided world of the Roman Empire. God's desire to have all humanity gathered in 'one tent' was being thwarted because walls had been erected to keep people apart. From the Jewish perspective one of the major walls was the division between Jews and Gentiles. From God's perspective all divisions between human beings were to be removed. Of course this move also required willingness on the part of humanity to participate in the

project.

Jesus and his small group of disciples were working at bringing this healing and wholeness into the world and the effects were quite astounding. As the disciples returned from their mission trip they were overwhelmed with wonder and joy because they had seen, first hand, what the plan of God was able to do in the lives of people who were hurting. The gift of wholeness and healing brought crowds of people to Jesus and he had compassion on them all. In the face of the tremendous power and influence of the Roman Empire a small light spread that would be healing and restoration to those who believed. After Jesus' death and resurrection small groups of disciples were scattered throughout the Roman world and they became avenues for this wholeness to enter into the wider world in greater and greater ways. The beauty of God's Creation was being restored and repairs to the brokenness were spread from within these healed communities.

The Christians in Ephesus were among those healed communities and St. Paul used a letter to remind them of how (and why) God brought that reality into their lives. In order for God to accomplish the purpose of restoring the Created Order to its original purpose God has chosen to begin by healing individual people and then uniting them into a family through which God's presence could be felt and seen. This new humanity is the means through which God has chosen to accomplish his purpose. In order for this new humanity to operate in the way God wishes it to do so an obedience and an openness of heart is required. In order for the structure to be a dwelling place for God it needs to follow God's path because the cause of the original problem is still present. The temptation to go a way that is different than God's way is still part of life but the power of that temptation has been broken. St. Paul reminds his readers of the miracle of unity that was accomplished among them through the work of God's Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ. The effects of this gift of unity was attractive and compelling to the other citizens in Ephesus so the community grew in both numbers and influence. This same story was seen in other communities in the Roman world. Places like Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, and Rome all had small groups of Christians living and working in them to help bring God's gift of wholeness and healing into their small groups and through them into the world around them. This is the work to which we have also been called.

Those of us who live and move in this century can be part of the same kind of story. Just like those first disciples of Jesus we have been sent out on a mission trip. We have been called upon to share the message of God's Good News and to comfort the afflicted, heal the sick, and proclaim the approach of the kingdom of heaven. We do this in many different ways, sometimes effectively and sometimes not so effectively. We ourselves need healing at times and our faith communities need to be reminded of

their purpose from time to time but we are all called and sent on a mission. The beauty of the miracle of unity will be as attractive in our society as it was in other times in history and it we are called upon to foster that unity by asking God to continue to break down the barriers that prevent the unity. The wholeness that is the mark of followers of Jesus needs to be allowed to enter our lives as the presence of God fills the dwelling place which is our faith community. In that sense we do not need to find any other solution to the divisions that exist in our society but we may need to open ourselves to even further involvement in God's project. The barriers have already been removed by God through Jesus Christ. The repair project has been at work throughout history so we don't need to find another one. We simply need to live in accordance with God's plan and purpose for our lives and to be willing to share that love with each other and with the world around us. As the pandemic restrictions are lifted and the possibility of returning to public worship events is offered the challenge of being the people of God remains. I pray that our gatherings will be opportunities for us to receive the gifts of healing and wholeness so we might continue in our work of helping the people around us be gathered into that same blessed unity that we enjoy.

God is in the process of mending broken things and has done so ultimately through the death and resurrection of Jesus. May we allow the things that are broken in us to be repaired so that we might be more effective messengers of Gods' love.