

**WEEK OF CHRISTIAN UNITY, JANUARY 30, 2022**

**ST. BRICE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH**

**PEACE, UNITY, RECONCILIATION, AND LOVE**

**KEEP JESUS CLOSE ALL THE TIME!**

**INTRODUCTION**

Thank Peter for his kind invitation to come to St. Brice's and speak on this occasion – unity, love, and peace among the Christian community in North Bay.

History my involvement in North Bay (December 28, 1981). 41 years and counting in one community but worshipping, preaching in several different communities of faith

Canadian Bible Society -- Dr. Kenneth McMillan wanted an Anglican – wife of Anglican priest who did not want to come North.

The Bible Society – instrument used by God – handmaiden of the church

I am especially thankful for the Anglican contribution to the development of my faith – I wanted to look like an Anglican, talk like an Anglican, and act like an Anglican. 1982—strong supporters of the Bible Society. Hence I wear a clergy collar.

The Living Word (the Bible) – tells us the story of God's infinite love through the Person of Jesus Christ

Central to gospel; when God revealed himself to humanity -- revelation of Scripture and the Person (Jesus).

Daily Bible Reading Guide – Ken Peterson (Lutheran from Saskatchewan) and Dale (Pentecostal)

Roommates – Ken is the only person on the planet earth that can watch a football game, a soccer game, a baseball game at the same time. He drove me crazy.

It has been a privilege and a blessing to know so many Christians in so many different churches, work in various activities and avenues. I have sensed a unity, a love, and a peace that is profound.

As we look at the story found in Luke 4: 21-30, I want you to notice a few things about this story:

**PP 1 KEEP JESUS CLOSE; NOT DISTANT!** God longs to be near to us.!

1. As was his custom – he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. This is a good custom v16

Danger of declining church attendance (Covid). What will the church look like in the years going forward? The secular media would have you believe that if the trend continues into 2040-50 – there will be no.....church members left

2.THE MESSAGE OF GOOD NEWS

***Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.  
Isaiah – message of Hope and Good News of Isaiah 61  
God will make good on his promise to Israel.***

***Liberty -- Sight PP2***

***To be free -- John Stott***— True freedom is freedom to be our true selves, as God made us and meant us to be. Langham Partnership.

The Jewish people certainly were not free

### PP 3 The Jews show Prejudice and hatred to GENTILES AND THE ROMANS

I am fascinated by the text when it says:

Vs22 All spoke well of him and marvelled at his gracious words that were coming from his mouth. (did he expound on the Isaiah 61 Scripture – rabbi)

Vs28 All in the synagogue were filled with wrath....throw him down a cliff

Sitting, he relates how God wants to bring Israel back to its preeminent place in world. He wants to redeem, to set free the nation – I am the one who God has sent. I am the Anointed One. God is bringing forth his kingdom

Kingdom: Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

His kingdom – unity, peace, righteousness, love

In the gospel of Mark, when Jesus begins his ministry and announces that the kingdom is at hand -- Repentance and Believing.

What do the people believe? What you believe will affect you live? Behaviour and Belief go hand in hand.

How our world needs such a kingdom? War, death, destruction, fear

This scene shows us the prejudice that exists between the Jewish people and the Gentile people.

God's intention: through Abraham, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

## **PP4 'Refusing to let God be gracious'**

We owe a gratitude to the Jewish people -- Jesus – Saviour of the world. We tell God “you can't do that”

Covenant Relationship with Jehovah – universal – all the kinship groups of the earth would be blessed through Abraham and the family line. (Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Jesus)

Jesus breaks society's boundary markers.

Some of the things that Jesus said and did were shocking to his contemporaries.

Social Shock

Reference to the widow and to Naaman – stirred the emotions of his own people who sees Jesus as one of them (carpenter's son)v26, 27

Jesus wants to break down this barrier through his death. Following his resurrection, this new entity that we call the ecclesia (the Church) and in Ephesians 2

The gospel of Jesus Christ, to the Jew first, and then to the Gentiles. Epiphany (Magi—wisemen from the East—seen his star)

## **PP5 HOW DO YOU MOVE FROM ALIENATION TO PEACE AND RECONCILIATION?**

### **Paul's great theme in Ephesians 2**

Of this double Gentile alienation - from God and from God's people Israel - the so-called 'middle wall of partition' (verse 14, AV) or 'dividing wall of hostility' (RSV) was the standing symbol. It was a notable feature of the magnificent temple built in Jerusalem by Herod the Great.

The temple building itself was constructed on an elevated platform. Round it was the court of the priests. East of this was the court of Israel, and further east the court of the women.

These three courts for the priests, the lay men and the lay women of Israel respectively - were all on the same elevation as the temple itself from this level one descended five steps to a walled platform, and then on the other side of the wall fourteen more steps to another wall, beyond which was the outer court or Court of the Gentiles. This was a spacious court running right round the temple and its inner courts. From any part of it the Gentiles could look up and view the temple, but were not allowed to approach it. They were cut off from it by the surrounding wall, which was a one-and-a-half metre stone barricade, on which were displayed at intervals warning notices in Greek and Latin. They read, in effect, not 'Trespassers will be prosecuted' but 'Trespases will be executed'.

The famous Jewish historian Josephus describes this barricade in both his books. In his *\*Antiquities\** he writes that the temple was 'encompassed by a stone wall for a partition, with an inscription which forbade any foreigner to go in under pain of death'. In his *\*Wars of the Jews\** he is a little more explicit. There was, he writes, 'a partition made of stone all round, whose height was three cubits. Its

construction was very elegant; upon it stood pillars at equal distance from one another, declaring the law of purity, some in Greek and some in Roman letters, that “no foreigner should go within that sanctuary”.’

During the last hundred years or so two of the Greek notices have been discovered, one on 1871 and the other in 1935. The former, exhibited in the museum in Istanbul, is a white limestone slab measuring nearly a metre across. Its exact wording is as follows: ‘No foreigner may enter within the barrier and enclosure round the temple. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.’

Paul knew all about it from personal experience. Only about three years previously he had nearly been lynched himself by an angry Jewish mob who thought he had taken a Gentile with him into the Temple, interestingly enough an Ephesian named Trophimus. (Acts 21:27-31).

This then is the historical, social and religious background to Ephesians 2. Although all human beings are alienated from God because of sin, the Gentiles were also alienated from the people of God. And worse even than this double alienation (of which the temple wall was a symbol) was the active ‘enmity’ or ‘hostility’ (\*echthra\*) into which it continuously erupted - enmity between man and God and enmity between Gentiles and Jews.

The grand theme of Ephesians 2 is that Jesus Christ has destroyed both enmities. Both are mentioned in the second half of the chapter, although in the opposite order:

verse 14 ‘He...has made both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility (\*echthra\*).’

verse 16 'That he...might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility (\*echthra\*) to an end.'

Alongside his destruction of these two enmities Jesus has succeeded in creating a new society, in fact a new humanity, in which alienation has given way to reconciliation, and hostility to peace. And this new human unity in Christ is the pledge and foretaste of that final unity under Christ's headship to which Paul has already looked forward in 1:10. Gentiles – spiritual biography by Paul

'(1) At one time you were alienated from God and from his people Israel. (2) By death on the cross Christ Jesus has reconciled Jews and Gentiles both to each other and to God, creating "a single new humanity" (Verse 15, NEB). (3) You are no longer alienated but full members with Israel of God's people and family.'

The three stages are marked by the expressions 'at one time' (verse 11), 'but now' (verse 13) and 'so then' (verse 19). And the sequence runs: \*Remember that at one time you ...were alienated...but now in Christ Jesus you ... have been brought near...for he is our peace... So then you are no longer strangers... but... fellow citizens with the saints...\* I shall entitle the three unfolding stages of God's plan as follows:

a). the portrait of an alienated humanity, or what we once were (verses 11-12)

b). the portrait of the peacemaking Christ, or what Jesus Christ has done (verses 13-18)

c). the portrait of God's new society, or what we have now become (verses 19-22)

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Our behaviour is affected by our decision to become a follower of Jesus Christ. Dietrich Bonhoeffer would speak of cheap grace. He found his fellow Christians to be shallow and superficial. Do you know where Dietrich Bonhoeffer found the courage to return to Germany in 1933

Black Church in Harlem – became friends with a French man, a black man, and a Spanish man. They journeyed down to Mexico together. He saw how the blacks lived. Remember us when go back to Germany.

Movie – All Quiet on the Western Front—story written by Erich Maria Remarque, a German veteran of WW I. –horrors of war

The hero in the story is a young German boy named Paul, who off to fight for his country during “the Great War”. One powerful scene. In this scene, Paul is separated from his company in the heat of battle. He hides out in a bomb crater, exhausted and terrified....completely alone. The unthinkable happens when a young French soldier jumps into the trenches with him. Paul’s knee-jerk reaction is to attack.

What happens next is shocking to most readers. Because of the impending danger outside the crater, Paul is forced to spend the night with his wounded enemy. This young French man is dying a slow and painful death. I am to blame. I am the enemy. They are the same age—two young men together.

The young French man is just another young man like himself  
They are close. They are near.

Who is in the trenches with you right now? Who are you near?  
Who do you see on the street when you the downtown Main street?  
When Jesus is near, our hearts are soft; we can hear. We listen. We are changed. The closer we become to them ==purer the gospel is seen!