

Vision and Values Sermon Series (Fall, 2015)

Summary of Brendon's Sermon, October 18, 2015:

Text: Genesis 1:24-31; Revelation 5:6-10

Values: Scripture, Prayer, Generosity, **Diversity**, Community, Creativity, Outreach, Justice, Love.

We value Diversity: We are committed to honouring the uniqueness of one another in mutual respect, love and hope for human wholeness.

Diversity is a great gift from God. God's creation is diverse in its beauty and beautiful in its diversity. We worship a God of unity in diversity. God in three persons, Blessed Trinity!

While diversity is a great gift, it is also a challenge. Distorted by sin, human diversity is experienced in divisive and destructive ways. Rather than celebrating the diversity of genders and cultures and races and nations, we distort the differences and divide humanity on the basis of how we look and speak and think and act.

Segregation in the church is a great tragedy! The church should be leading the way in cultivating communities of diversity. We serve, Jesus the Slain Lamb, who redeemed people from every tribe and language and people and nation. In Christ, there is no longer Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free; we are all one in Him (Galatians 3:28).

We are free to express our diversity without creating divisions. We are free to celebrate and honour the uniqueness of others without expecting them to become like us.

Scot McKnight, in *A Fellowship of Differents*, describes the church as "the most radical social experiment in history" (p. 109).

Diversity enriches our experience. We all bring different gifts to the table. In 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, Paul speaks of the diversity of gifts given to the church through the Spirit. As we offer those gifts to each other, as we are open to receiving them, we grow together toward maturity in Christ.

Embracing and respecting diversity can be hard work. But diversity is essential; it is foundational to a healthy, flourishing community.

As a church our theological beliefs defines who we are and sets parameters on how we live. But even there, we need to extend grace to everyone in our community, especially those who see things differently from us. We need to create space for good, generous conversation, where we listen well, where we seek to understand each other, where we can begin to confess our sins to one another, and where we assure each other of Christ's love for us and our love for each other, even when we may come to different conclusions. And we need to remind each other that God's work is ongoing in each of us, that he is never finished with any of us, and that his Spirit is generous and patient with us as he works in all of us, to renew us and to bring us into alignment with all that Jesus wants for us.

.Questions for Discussion (For Small Group and Others):

1. What are your thoughts and feelings regarding the value of Diversity?
2. How have you experienced the challenge of diversity, personally and in the church community? How have you witnessed diversity as divisive and destructive?
3. How have you experienced diversity as a gift and means of growth? What do you think of Scot McKnight that "the church is the most radical social experiment in history"?
4. What practice(s) have you found most helpful in engaging diversity and fostering unity in community?
5. Consider reading the article by Ron Sider: Homosexuality: A Better Way. <http://www.redletterchristians.org/homosexuality-a-better-approach/#comments>
What are some "take aways" from it for you personally? What should we be considering from it as a community?