

Sermon Theme: Creativity and faith

Sunday 6 July 2014 Worship, Milson Combined Church Silvia Purdie

Verse for the day: Ephesians 5:13. Everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.

Prayer for the day: Lord God, we bless you, we praise you! You who are Creator and ever creating, work your creativity in us and in the work of our hands and minds. Amen.

Bible reading: Ephesians 4:22 – 5:2

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Sermon: Co-Creating

Silvia

Did you hear about the wee girl at Kindy who was painting away at the easel when the teacher came up and asked her what she was painting.

“I’m painting God” said the girl

“Gosh” said the teacher, rather taken aback. “But no one knows what God looks like.”

“Well” said the wee girl, “They will now!”

We have been talking about some big issues lately. Hard-to-get-your-head-around issues, stuff like “what happens when you die?” and ‘what’s going on in Syrian and Iraq?’ and ‘What is life all about anyway?’ ... we’ve been asking the kinds of questions that no answer will ever quite answer.

Which has been good for us, I think. Good for the brain, good for us to think about stuff which is a bit outside of what we know and can do much about or know much about.

The problem with questions like that is that if you don’t watch out they can leave you even more confused, or maybe even depressed ... the issues can seem so big, the problems so unsolvable, the answers so elusive ... what can little old me do about it all?

That’s why I wanted to focus on creativity today. Because our calling as followers of Jesus Christ is to continue the work of Christ in the world.

And there are two main ways we do that ... one is by participating spiritually in his life through worship and prayer. The other is participating practically in his mission through work and service. And when we work and as we serve we share in the power of God, a power which in its very essence is creative. The energy we find for our daily lives is the very same energy which called stars and starfish into being. The imagination we find for planning a meal or designing a letterbox is

the very same power that imagined rainbows and the intricacies of the human brain.

A word if I may about theology and scripture. What does our church tradition have to say about creativity?

Firstly is the beginning, God's creative act of Creation itself, Genesis 1, 'in the beginning' ... and there are basic elements to this which matter for us and our work

- 1) God was ... his very being WAS. He existed before creation.
- 2) God imagined ... before he spoke things into being there was divine plan, purpose. Before rocks were, they existed in God's imagination.
- 3) God acted to create ... speech, words, language, as well as touch, shaping, making ... it was work, action, effort
- 4) God celebrated "It is good". He noticed, saw, appreciated
- 5) God rested. Time after the work to relax, pause, enjoy peace.

Christian theology makes much of 1:27, which repeats itself for double strength effect:

"So God created humanity in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them"

and a core part of our being 'in the image of God' is our ability to also create, to be, to imagine, to act, to celebrate and to rest. We can use our creative power for selfish gain or even to destroy, but when we are in God's will & ways we share in and continue the creation of God.

So Paul writing to the Ephesians again bases his vision for Christian living on this core idea: Eph 4: 24, 'clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.' ... there it is again. You are made in the image of God. You look like God! Sure, you can stuff that up and trash this image, but Jesus Christ has saved you from death into life, as Paul writes in 2:8: "

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."

It's God's creating power again ... God imagining before we even get there who we might be and what we might be capable of ... God acting to give us gifts and to call out of us what we might just be capable of ... God celebrating that in his people ... and God resting too, entrusting it to

us, and inviting us to entrust it back to him, for our creative work is never ours alone but a living partnership between us and God.

I won't talk much longer. I simply wanted to encourage you this morning in your creativity. You might think 'But I'm not Creative!'. You might not enjoy working with bits of coloured fabric like Beryl does or notes on the piano like I do, but maybe you like smoothing off a bit of wood like Robert does, or take pride in a darned good scone like Norma does. Maybe you express your creative potential in a beautifully worded letter to a friend, or a neat row of flower plants in the front yard. We do have amazingly creative people in this church who form astonishing cards, like Dorothy does, or computer animations like Emily does.

Whenever you can picture something in your mind that does not yet exist, that is creativity. Whenever you can use your hands to fashion something out of other things, that is creativity. That is a sharing in the power that continues to create the universe.

The nice thing about creativity is that it brings us pleasure. And so sometimes we make something or imagine something just for the fun of it. If it happens to be useful to someone that's a bonus. That's God's spirit in you saying "And it was good". Good simply because of its own beauty. Good simply because it expresses something of who you are, and you are good, you are the pinnacle of creation.

So grapple with hard issues, work hard at the tasks to be done, but also enjoy, play, relax, take time to be creative for no other reason than it feels good.

I don't often quote popes but I will leave you with this from Pope John Paul II who in 1999 wrote a *Letter of His Holiness to Artists*.

"As Genesis has it, all men and women are entrusted with the task of crafting their own life: in a certain sense, they are to make of it a work of art, a masterpiece."