

Being In Christ

Identity

How do you begin to answer the question "Who are you?"?

Silvia shared some of the complex answer to this question by talking about the places she has lived and her family background.

How important to you is the **place** where you come from?
Or the place where you live now?

Reading 1, Romans 10:8-13

Do you remember a significant moment in your life when you said "Jesus is Lord" or believed in your heart that Christ is alive? If so, did that affect your life?

Can you affirm this today?

How do you understand 'being saved'?



Reading 2, Luke 4:1-13 - The Temptation of Jesus

*"What we worship is that to which we give
the power to define us"*

What in our society is given the
power to define who people are?

How does this affect people's lives?

To what do you give the power to
define who you are?

How might worship of God reshape
how we see ourselves?



The way Paul trains us to re-understand ourselves in relation to those we live with and work with is *as to Christ* or *in the Lord* or *under* a common Master. In the practice of resurrection we no longer understand our role by comparing it to some model taken from the culture, but always, without exception, to Christ. The measuring stick for maturity for the Christian is the 'measure of the full stature of Christ'.

If we are serious about the practice of resurrection, we have to do it in company with the risen Christ. We pay attention to the *ways* that Jesus forgave, loved, touched lepers, received outsiders, prayed for his friends. We know a lot about Jesus' *ways*. Resurrection is not a dogmatic truth that we spend the rest of our lives trying to understand.

Resurrection is not a behavior that we can perfect through carefully managed ascetic techniques. Resurrection is a *practice* in which we engage as we 'trust and obey, there is no other way', as the Spirit, 'God's Empowering Presence', brings the life of the Trinity alive in us, in Jesus' name.

Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on **Growing Up** in Christ



What it comes down to is this: you can either stay free from God, and thereby remain in bondage to yourself; or you can be freed by Christ from the domination of self, so that you may develop into the person you have it in you to become, and take your place in the world-wide society of freemen which God is building up. That is the ultimate dimension of freedom. And that is the decision which faces Everyman.

... What you must decide is this – do you want freedom, real freedom? Or will you rest content with your present bondage to sin, to self, to fashion, and a hundred and one other things? You must choose. God will never force your hand. But God intends you to be free. That's why Jesus went to the cross. And whether you choose freedom or not, be quite sure of this; you *were chosen* for it. If you say 'No' you reject your proper destiny as a responsible human being."

Michael Green, True Freedom, p.71

Being a Blessing

What do you love to do?	What would you rather not have to do?
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Think about a time when you felt good about saying or doing something that blessed another person. What did God do through you?

In her sermon, Silvia talked about two attitudes that block the flow of blessing: 'I deserve it' and 'I'm a burden'. Do you notice these in yourself?

What might God be wanting to say to people you know?

How might God be wanting to bless the people around us through our church?
(This is the central question for our congregational discussion next Sunday, 28 Feb, 11.30am, as part of our planning for mission. Parish Council would value your contribution.)

Lectionary Readings: Luke 13:31-35

This passage includes the wonderful verse in which Jesus describes himself as a mother hen, longing to gather her chicks under her wings.

Discuss this as a metaphor for the work of God in the world. How does this fit with how we understand the mission of the church?

Philippians 3:17 – 4:1

Paul lays a stark contrast between those who live according to worldly standards and those whose citizenship is not 'NZ' but 'heaven'. Being 'in Christ' is a radically different

frame of reference and belonging. In Christ we are formed into "his own glorious body, using that power by which he is able to bring all things under his rule." (3:21)

**How would you like to live this more fully,
being blessed and being a blessing?**

"The love of our neighbour is the only door
out of the dungeon of self"

George MacDonald

Reading: 'Outflow'

We want to serve God both as a loving response to all he's given to us and because we've glimpsed the staggering richness that comes from being with him in this world and the next. As 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us" (NIV). We don't serve in order to be accepted; we serve because we are accepted – it's a natural outflowing of our relationship with God. God loves us whether we serve or not, but our relationship with him is so much richer if we serve him. It makes our intimacy deeper. We listen to God. We love God. We share with God. We serve God. None of these alone is the key to a strong relationship.

Being light and salt isn't just something you do – it becomes a fundamental part of who you are. You are the light and you are the salt as you let Jesus work in you and you let others see what he's doing in you. As you tap into his fountain and allow his life to pour through you and overflow into the lives of others you'll become different. A big part of that is growing a more empathetic and understanding heart. God loves you so much that he won't be content until you are so full of his goodness, compassion, honesty and kindness that it will overflow into the lives all around you and even to the uttermost parts of the earth.

by Steve Sjogren and Dave Ping,

'Outflow: outward-focused living in a self-focused world'

Reading: We are Gift

We begin as gift, we don't make ourselves. We find our fundamental identity as gift. We have been given much. As we grow we begin exercising these gifts in community. We gradually learn to live what we have been given wisely and well. If we are to become mature, we must gradually but surely realize ourselves as gift from first to last. Otherwise we will misconceive our creation as self-creation and end up in some cul-de-sac or other of arrested development.

What Paul insists on is that everything we do in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Spirit is an obedient exercise of some aspect of the work of the Trinity that we get in on as we become mature enough to do it. Each Christian participates in his or own specific way in the context and conditions of his or her own life circumstances, but none of us do it on our own or under our own power. We live and work and have our being in a world lavishly showered with gifts. We embrace the work as gift. And what a gift! – working alongside our Lord in this great salvation enterprise. We become willing participants in the way that Christ is King, a life given. We grow up.

by Eugene Peterson

'Practice Resurrection:

A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ'



'Being Changed'

Under the shower of Confession

(a poem about Psalm 51, Silvia Purdie)

The most lovely of Psalms
but how do we get to verse 1?
What needs to happen in us before we can begin?
us silly people tend to be much more
comfortable hiding
under umbrellas of self justification.

Drat. things have gone bad.
It's not my fault!
If only he wasn't so arrogant
she needs to sort her stuff out
you change, not me!
The last thing we want to do
is recognize our rebellion.
How do we train ourselves
to bring honesty to our God
to peel back the layers of pride?
We quite like our own dirt
do we want to be washed clean?

This Psalm, of all Psalms,
takes the most guts to read
Like a child shoved under the shower
Take a deep breath and begin –
Have mercy on me, O God ...

Bible Readings:

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:11-32

*Lord grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the ONE I can,
and the wisdom to know -
that one is ME.*



For reflection & discussion:

1. What would you like to change about yourself?
2. What social changes do you see as bad?
3. What is worth fighting to preserve?
4. How have you been changed when your environment changed?
5. How do you try to change other people?
6. How have you been changed by knowing you were loved?
7. What is 'Confession' for you?

Discuss this from Silvia's sermon:

"Our intimate relationships are constructed out of the tension between accepting other people as they are, and wanting them to be different so that our own needs are better met in that relationship.

The central moment in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son is the paradox that we change when we are accepted, we are made new through love more than by any other force."