

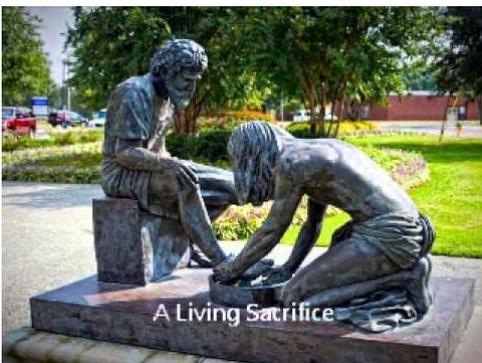
Pentecost Manifesto!

This Christian faith, it's not all about Jesus! That's a weird thing for a pastor to say eh! But it's not. That's what makes Christianity so interesting – our faith has three faces to it. Jesus is the first face, the face of God made human; but there are two other faces of God. God the creator – behind all things and God the Holy Spirit – who comes to live in us when we become Christians. This is my favourite part – we don't have to be Christians on our own. Over the next few weeks I want to talk about the Trinity and the Holy Spirit – and how the Spirit can fill us and change us. But this is not a soft series – this is a brave series of how the Spirit of Jesus can take us to new depths of love. Cool eh.



First of all, I want to introduce you to a collage I want to use as a symbol of the Trinity. This first picture is of a dancer, dancing, she is a Russian Ballerina – she has trained for years and here she is dancing with delight. To me she is a picture of Jesus living life to its fullest. We don't become a Christian so that we can read the bible, say our prayers and do our exercises. We become a Christian so that we can dance with God. So to me this

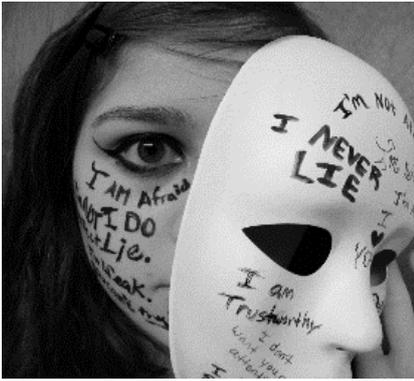
Painting of Anna Pavlova, painted in 1911 by John Lavery, which is in the Kelvingrove gallery – is a picture of our Redeemer. This next picture is a snap of a little girl dancing in front of that painting in this rather poncy gallery. The back story is that she is a dancer, and she has been learning – and she is entranced by the Painting and trying to follow. Look at her aspiration, and she is not doing a bad job. To me she is a picture of the Holy Spirit helping us to follow Jesus; not perfect – but not too shabby. Then I have added a third picture of the unseen mother delighting in her daughter imitating Anna Pavlova. And to me the mother represents God the creator behind all things. Not a stern father but a loving father, a loving mother who has given of herself so that her daughter might dance like Anna. An unusually feminine picture of the Trinity, but one I invite you to reflect on. Now let's turn to the scripture.



Here the Apostle Paul has told his new Christian friends what the goal of being a Christian is. To be a living sacrifice. He's talking to people who later were burnt alive by Nero for their faith. But that's not what he means. In the words of onward Christian soldiers – "As he died to make them Holy, let us live to make them free." I think God wants us to live brave lives making a positive difference in the world. So in the first half of Romans 12 he talks about our minds; and then in the second half of Romans 12 which we have read he talks about how to live together as a redemptive community. Isn't that great. At

the end of Romans 12 he then talks about how to fight evil – finishing with a powerful verse for this week. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with Good. In a world on high alert because of evil men with long knives – we desperately need that message. We can disagree with Islam, but if we start hating Muslims then the terrorists have won. That's what they want. For us to be overcome by evil.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



I love this first phrase. It's talking about how to live as a redemptive community. And it says, love – agape meaning deep self-donating love, must be an hypocritis – non hypocritical; literally without masks. I find this very challenging. It says that at times I need to be more open with my Christian friends – otherwise this Christianity thing won't work. Not only do I need to be a good listener, leader, friend and preacher – I need to be willing to let my mask down at times. And so do you. Otherwise I won't know how to love you. I'm not talking about bearing my soul in the pulpit every week. But I can say that Karen and I are looking

after our Uncle who has had a very sudden onset of Dementia and it is really hard work. Hate what is evil – I think Paul means hate what is evil in our friend's character – don't encourage the green eyes monster – say "that comment is unworthy of you". But read the next bit, cling to what is good. When you see something small and worthy in your friend – cling to it. Hope and nourish the good. I remember Glen Hulbert saying at an ICONZ planning meeting – sometimes you have to watch a kid for the moment they are doing something right & praise that or the moment they are not doing something wrong!



Next there are 4 word for love in Greek, Paul uses 3 of them in these first two verses, Philos as in Phiadelphia – brotherly love, and stroge – strong love. Strongly love each other as brothers and sisters. Compete in showing honour. Isn't that a great prescription for marriage – compete in being respectful of each other, putting the other person up rather than the other person down.

I'm a kiwi bloke – I breathe in a culture of put downs, sledging and teasing. Here Paul is talking to kiwi blokes and saying put your

mates up, don't put them down.

Just note that might be the one sentence in this sermon that is for you.



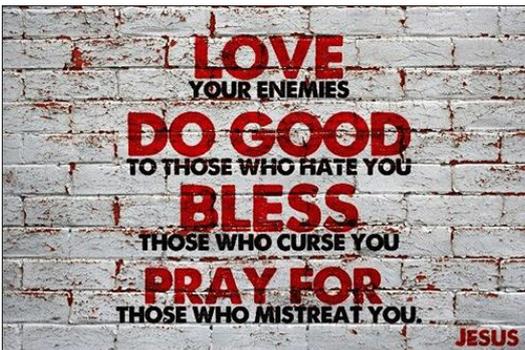
Now Paul turns to our relationship with God. With God the Holy Spirit. Don't be lazy about the things of the Spirit. Seek God, and cultivate a burning spirit for serving God. That's the secret of good community life is where we are not having to drag a dead horse, or a reluctant one. I don't want to be dragging people into ministry roles as if they are just another thing to do. I want to be putting my hand up for what I feel I can do for God. In the church and outside. I want to serve God with the best that I have. I want

to soberly assess my capacity and go the extra mile where I can. I don't want to be a downer. I want to contribute to this Christian community – believing that we are the hope for the world. I want to challenge you all, if possible be early to church. Encourage someone, and then come in and sing with all your heart. It's hard work on the platform if there's no one here at 10am and if you look distracted. Let me encourage you to cultivate the spirits fire. How? Well if you pray in tongues – pray in tongues. If you worship – worship. If you love nature – I was standing on Mt. Ruapehu last weekend at 6.30am with my hand raised in the air worshipping God!



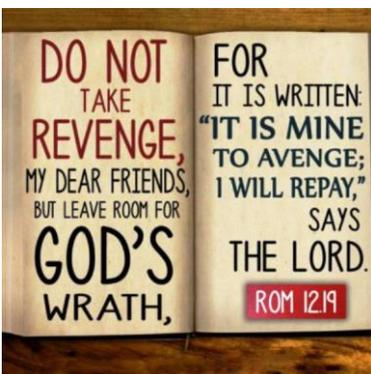
So it would be easy to read these things as individuals but I think these are corporate things to do – together. Certainly Paul reinforces that a couple of lines later. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Bring your emotional self to worship and to God. And let's share that rejoicing! If something good happens – tell people. Tell your small group. Tell the church. Tell your prayer shepherd. And the same if you are in pain. Most of you have seen my splint. I have a damaged tendon. I did it in February. Yes, it's still a problem. Actually it hurts a lot. No I'm not over it yet. "sorry to see your hand is still sore." great words. And brothers and sisters lets

pray for each other! If someone is in needs lets share, and let's show hospitality. Could you share food with someone this week?



Paul has been talking about living as a redeemed community. Now he has some strong words. Bless – remember the discipleship series Bless People? Bless those who persecute you. This is vintage Jesus. This is what being a living sacrifice means. Bless – meaning do good stuff towards. Does Paul means bless the jihadis? Does Paul mean bless those who bully you? The big picture right down to the very small picture. What do you think? How are we meant to respond to terrorism? How

are we meant to respond to thugs?



Well Paul gives a list of good advice you can read – but let me pick out two. So far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Now that doesn't mean be a bystander to violence and oppression. What it means is don't start the fight. Don't be the aggressor, don't pick fights. You know when I'm in a bad mood – my kids notice I start fight; I pick on silly things. Don't do it. And secondly – never avenge yourselves. Wow that's huge.

If someone crosses you at work. If you mess with me – I'll get you. I can't give you an example, but I know the feeling. Leave room for God. Let him avenge. And the annoying thing about God is that quite

often he fixes relationships. I was very frustrated with the treasurer at the Light house last year – we were just at log a heads over some stuff. I backed off, he did too and then through a God thing we met for coffee and now last weekend we had the best time taking a dozen teenagers down to the mountain for a Duke of Edinburgh tramp. But also I have seen God unpick people who are genuinely evil, so that their reputation, their family, their sanity has all fallen apart as a consequence of their abuse. Slow to judge but powerful. This week the government apologized for the horror of Parahaka. Peaceable people beaten, dispossessed & raped. That community felt shamed for over 100 years but today it is the generations of the abusers who are owning the shame.



And then to finish. Paul gives what I believe is A Pentecost Manifesto – This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Overcome evil with good. See the good in every human being and feed the good. Overcome is not a soft nor a weak word. How? By blessing and not cursing. By inviting our enemies to our table and breaking down the barriers that Satan is trying to erect. If your enemy is hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty give them a drink. Reach out this week to someone different, and bless a stranger. Amen.

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