

Order of Service. Spy Hill United Church.

Sunday.....February 11th 1968.

Call to Worship.....

Holy, Holy? Holy,

Invocation

Hymn

488

Old Testament Reading.....Nehemiah 2 : 1-20

Responsive Psalm..... 728.

New Testament Reading.....James 1 :1-17.

Choir.

586 - Last v.

Announcements = S.S. Story. Childrens hospital. Kiddie with gift.

Hymn.....

259. Sunday School. Last v.

Prayers of Confession.... Petition....Lord's Prayer.

Meditation or Sermon ...Breaking Down Barriers.Prayer.

Offering Dedication.

Prayers of Intercession/ Thanksgiving.

Hymn.

434

Benediction...

Blessings gifts to thy use
& us to thy service
Amen

Breaking Down Barriers. Jeremiah 2:1-20

The Bible and Man, The Person.

A young woman remarked the other day. "So he called me and she was at her wits end. She teaches Sunday school. Her superintendant is not interested and does not want to be superintendant anyway. she felt all alone with her troubles and just didn't know where to turn for someone to talk to and advise. Her friend remarked that she should talk it over with the minister. "Oh I can't talk to him". He just pays no attention. I just can't talk to him! Well what about Mr. S.? Do you know him?" "Oh yes I know him and I can talk to him. Well why don't you go and talk things over with him then. Oh I can't do that, his church is a different denomination and I feel that I shouldn't go outside our own church. "But you can talk to him? "Oh yes." "Well for goodness sake forget about denominations and talk your problem over with Mr. S. After all he is just a person the same as you and what difference do denominations make. We are ^{all} supposed to be Christians."

Breaking down Barriers. The greatest problem facing Christians today. We are fearful of precedent. Fearful of being ridiculed

2.
Something wrong?
Scattered abroad James 1-1

The world as we know it today faces
human problems that seem insurmountable.
Fractured into dozens of differing denominations
Christianity appears to be fighting a losing
battle. If the battle is being lost the
question arises, why? If it is being lost
by the direction in which we are
travelling and by the means and effort we
are using then there must be a cause.

Perhaps the cause lies in the fact
that Christians the world over worship the
one God, profess belief in the holy Trinity,
but are fractured beyond recognition in
their efforts to achieve the goal they all
profess. The Kingdom of God on Earth

It is one of the mysteries of our day and age
that we are so divided. And in the history of peoples
it has happened before. In our reading from the book
of Nehemiah we have a picture of a fragmented
Jerusalem, the city burned, its defences destroyed
and the enemy camping outside ready to
harrass anyone that ventured outside the confines

We are told of the rebuilding of Jerusalem
under the guidance of one determined man
who himself was virtually a slave, albeit a
most trusted one, in a foreign country.

He had learned much from the foreigners
whom he was forced to serve. He had learned
the reason for their successes under arms

He story

he had also studied their weaknesses. Their worship of numerous false gods they had made themselves. Their various forms of worship and from observing all these Jeremiahs faith in his own God was strengthened. He served his master the King Artaxerxes of Greece with such loyalty that he had been made the kings cup bearer one of the most responsible positions the king could grant. When he wished to return to Jerusalem to help his countrymen the king not only gave him safe passports he also gave him material to help accomplish the work and leave of absence. The latter perhaps the most risky to Artaxerxes ^{own} personal safety.

We have this story of two persons understanding the problems of each other. The one a king the other a slave. This was the real groundwork that started the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Jeremiahs was fearful about his request of leave of absence and how the king would meet it but his determination overcame fear and the kings help gave him further strength to undertake the work. His strengthened faith gave him power to ignore the taunts of Sanballat, ^{the governor of the conquerors of Palestine} and his generals who were besieging Jerusalem.

18. qui There is a story told in one of the books of the Old Testament. It is the story of Nehemiah's rebuilding of Jerusalem. Perhaps from it we could learn if we will, a lesson and an example that we could follow even in our so called modern day and time.

In the time of Artaxerxes king of Greece his conduct in letting his cupbearer and slave return to his native land to rebuild Jerusalem must have seemed extraordinary to his nobles and advisors. Even giving him passports through countries and armies that were hostile to the Jews. Giving him a detachment of soldiers to accompany him. One of the governors of the conquered Jewish country round Jerusalem was furious but he had to recognize his king's passport.

Nehemiah found Jerusalem, as he had been told, in shambles. The great walls destroyed or pulled down the gates burned and even worse the people themselves although still worshipping Jehovah divided into a dozen different factions under as many heads of families and through their bitterness and suspicion unable to communicate with each other.

Nehemiah's achievement in rebuilding the city, cementing warring factions within and repelling Sanbalat's army without is one of the greatest stories of cooperation in the Bible.

He began his work by telling his people all the things God had done for him ~~as~~ a slave in a foreign land. How he was among them by the will of God. He didn't tell them what they should do, how wicked they were. They knew something was wrong and Jeremiah showed them the cause of their trouble. He then told them how if they forgot their schisms and differences and all worked for the one common purpose they could rebuild Jerusalem even in the face of hostility and derision from friend and foe alike.

In our own day and time Christianity is another fragmented Jerusalem. We have so many sects, denominations and partitions in Christian living that we cannot get into one room and decide to work together regardless of who gets credit for what? We have the young woman mentioned who cannot talk to her own minister and is frightened of criticism if she goes to a minister of another denomination.

There is the story of an old pioneer woman who had followed her husband on mission work from Scotland to South America to Canada. When she was dying her son came to the only minister near them and asked if he would mind coming out to see his mother before she died. "I'm sorry" was the reply, "I'd like to, but you know your mother is ^{not of our denomination} an Anglican and I don't think I should!"

Somehow or other the old priest at St. Lazare

heard of the matter and walked the best part of twenty miles to visit the one in need. Which one of these then was friend to the dying sinner? We can be sure that in Heaven these people have all met, forgave and have been forgiven, but on earth how we do hinder Gods work for lack of understanding and communication.

Again it may be Gods plan that we humans learn our lesson and learn it well so that we will have the courage and daring to pass it on to our children and childrens children. We are certainly being shown, if we care to look, that fragmented Christianity will not work. We are slowly but surely seeing God at work in the world using our errors and trials to point out his will and his way. He is showing us that persons count more than denominations that the person or people we think we could not ever work with have some pretty good ideas of their own and if we all pool those ideas and share with others in the Christian work of our world regardless of who reaps the credit then that for which we pray "Thy Kingdom Come" will be much nearer reality than we dream.

Let us pray.

Amen.

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Dr. Paul Tournier in his book "The Meaning of Persons" says this in the chapter entitled "The Living God" "It is above all through the Bible, the book of the word revealed and incarnate, that God speaks, and personal contact with him is established. And when it is established, Bible reading is no longer an irksome effort to solve an enigma, as to abstract general precepts. It becomes a personal dialogue in which the least word touches us personally."

Why does the Bible so often speak of 'the Living' God? Surely it is because the God it reveals to us is not the God of the philosophers, outside time and space, the origin of all things or the sublimest possible conception of the mind. He is a living person, a person whose voice breaks in upon us, who himself intervenes, who acts, who suffers, who enters into history in Jesus Christ, who enters men by the Holy Spirit. We recognize in him the characteristics of life we studied earlier - not so much motionless essence, as movement, impulsion, guiding force.

At the same time the Bible reveals to us what the person is. Man is the being to whom God speaks, with whom he thus enters into a personal relationship. After having created the whole inorganic world, and all the plants and animals - a world blindly and impersonally subject to him - God created man in his image; that is to say a personal being, a partner in dialogue, a being to

Pastor Jean-Daniel Bindschadler - Le
fondement théologique de la Personne

whom he might speak and who could answer,
to whom he gave liberty, and whose liberty, refusals
and silences he respects, but whose replies he also
awaits.

"The Bible always shows man as a unity, and
always, in his totality, 'in his place before God'. The
→ term, body, flesh, soul, mind do not in the Bible
refer to distinct parts of man, attached together
in some way, but 'always ~~as~~ the whole person seen
from a particular angle'. As for the Spirit neither is
it used to designate a constituent part of man:
by the Spirit we understand the whole man as
God speaks to him From that moment man
becomes a Person, for it is a personal relationship into
which he enters with God."

Nehemiah - Prays to his God. Before talking
to King Artaxerxes. Before rebuilding the
wall of Jerusalem.