

40 Days of Fitness

A daily devotional by Rev Garry Hardingham

DAY 33 – Worship and the community of Grace

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practise cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:1 - 6

**WARNING!! THE TEXT BELOW CONTAINS QUOTES FROM J.B. TORRANCE!!
DO NOT ATTEMPT UNLESS YOU ARE VERY WELL CAFFEINATED.
DO NOT OPERATE HEAVY MACHINERY IMMEDIATELY AFTER!!
IF PAIN PERSISTS, SEE YOUR DOCTOR.**

This passage from 2 Corinthians captures all of what we've been exploring over the past week. From faith and belief to proclaiming Jesus and not ourselves and to the epiphany of the church (Let the light shine...)

One of the many of my expensive and often unused books of theology that I purchased during my time in college was James B. Torrance's, "*Worship, community and the Triune God of grace*" (1996). It's a book that is compilation of a series of lectures Torrance gave called the "Disbury Lectures"...so it's quite readable...um...for J.B. Torrance anyway. I find Torrance's books a bit like completely stuffing your mouth with Milk Arrowroot biscuits and then trying to swallow them.

Anyway, in one section that he wrote says this: "*In its worship the church, as it were, recapitulates the whole history of God economy of salvation from creation to the consummation of the world. By virtue of its union with Christ, who is the new covenant, the one in whom the relationship between God and the creature is renewed. If Jesus himself is this new covenant and if Jesus, as word of God, is the one through who the world is called into existence. If Jesus Christ, as Paul says to the Corinthians, is the one in whom the relationship between God and the Israel is mediated. And if this covenant between God in Israel is mediated by Christ as the one who fulfils the covenant for Israel and the whole of humanity. If this one is present in worship then the church is united in Christ with this history of salvation which goes back to creation and stretches forward to the consummation, to the fulfilment of the purpose of God's reconciling activities in recreation of the world. So that Christian worship has its place, because of the incorporation in Christ, as members of his earthly body, has a place in the economy of God's salvation.*"

You might want to plough that field a few times, but in a nutshell, Torrance is arguing that the church, in its praise, its prayer, and its self-offering, becomes part of God's reconciling activity in the world. The presence of Scripture, proclamation, Word and Sacrament incorporated into the worship of Christ, reveals that history of God's relationship with creation from beginning to end.

So this means three things really.

1. Worship in the church is not an optional extra. The church is simply not the church if it doesn't gather to worship. You cannot be a church that serves the community and not worship God. To do so makes you a service club with a twist of religion. The same applies to the corporate structure of the church. You cannot run the church as a business that "sells" religious services. It's central focus is Worship!
2. Worship in the church foreshadows the judgement and the renewal of all things. Without Worship there is no foretaste of the Kingdom to come. Worship makes clear this Kingdom to all who participate in it.
3. The Eucharist is a central form of worship that must be central to the act of Christian Worship because it belongs squarely as a fundamental act of worship

PRAYER

Lord, let our Worship reveal You and only You. Let it shine forth into the world and give us a foretaste of Your Kingdom to Come. Show us now through Your Holy Spirit the majesty of Your presence and may all we do in every part of the church be worship and praise to You. Amen.