

Pentecost Sunday 2020.05.31 - Reflection by Michael Palmer

(This text is prepared as a background reflection on the 'Chalk Board Talk' which is located on our Eden Uniting Web page. [<https://youtu.be/2334BEbYsbg>] I hope the following text makes sense in its own right but it will fall more completely in place if that 'Chalk Board Talk' is viewed.)

Peace is never easy sometimes we fight over very simple things (It is easy to have divisions - easy as a fight over a slice of pie.....)

Of course, there are more significant divisions in life which break our peace. For Example - Race riots - over injustice and division caused by inequality see the rise of 'The Precariat'.

Peace is very important to us - and when it is broken we feel very sad.

When Jesus rose from the dead and met with his disciples (John 20:19-23) and declared to them, 'Peace be with you'.

Immediately after declaring Peace (he then breathed on them which referred to the Holy Spirit) he then immediately spoke about forgiveness because forgiveness is at the heart of our Peace.

Of course, Jesus is talking of a very deep peace - A peace which is for all no matter what our race/colour or what 'was our belief' background or our social status - 1 cor.12 13 race/religion/social status -

Once we follow Jesus then all the things that might have separated us one from one another - these can all move to the background as we find our peace in Jesus

This Peace is difficult and at its heart is requires forgiveness - which is also difficult - Hence we need the Spirit to help us

And this challenge and call to forgive (and retain sin - John 20:23) was not just for the apostles or the elders and not just for individuals - this is a call and a challenge for the entire Church - we collectively pronounce - forgiveness - and collectively determine which sins might be retained - **But let me stress** - We collectively - test and confirm - what God has already done in the life of another - and we make those pronouncements after careful consideration - and prayer - especially - we will give weight to confession of repentance and evidence of new attitudes. It is not mechanical - not just for apostles - AND never foundational as 'ours to forgive or retain' as only God forgives and only God can withhold forgiveness!

You can see why this forgiveness needs the full gifts of the spirit. Interesting - central in the list of gifts as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 is healing. I take it that this 'healing' is physical but also relational! And especially in the relational sphere when John 20:23 is concerned, pronouncements about forgiveness and sin is built on solid teaching/edification - which comprises a majority emphasis of the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

Remember the breadth of scripture - Only God forgives! At best we collectively - declare what sins are forgiven (by God) and what are retained (by God)

It is the Holy Spirit that gives breath to our gatherings/discipleship - without the spirit we are like a tyre without air - we simply do not roll!

And when the Spirit is within us - then we will expect that the evidence of the Spirit among us to be the following:

An emphasis on 'The Common Good'

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:7
&

An emphasis on 'Unity'

For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves of free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13

In all of this we need the Holy Spirit. God takes us to the common good and unity with some effort - We are **made** to drink of one Spirit - it is only by grace that we yield to one body (Unity) and common good

Hence - If this is the case, we:

1. Celebrate our unity by giving thanks to God
2. Counter disunity with Prayer
3. Counter disunity with reliance on Word of God
4. Counter disunity with gathering together God has brought us together - let us live-out that reality and in the living of a dynamic interdependence for the common good unity will prevail.....
5. Protect unity - as a God declared priority - let us never be apathetic about disunity!
6. Encourage participation in the common good everyone as a part of play

May God bless you, and as the next song declares - may you have:
Power to speak and heal, Grace to know what's real,
Wisdom, insight and faith, Love and understanding.

Bible Readings

1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

One Body with Many Members

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

John 20:19-23 - Jesus Appears to the Disciples

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'