

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster  
Sunday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Pentecost X  
Isaiah 5:1-7, Psalm 80:1-2, 8-18, Hebrews 11:29-12:2, Luke 12:49-56

A number of years ago I was asked the question, is it a problem there are so many different churches? My answer no, as long as they don't think they're the only ones with the right answer.

But since then, I've asked myself the question, why are there so many different churches? Because each one the leadership thinks they are the only ones with the right answer. James Carse in his book the Silence of God says questions unite seeking answers together and answers divide because one has the answer, and the other does not, or they have different answers, and both think they are right.

Quite a while ago, there was a Bishop who called a perspective priest naive for considering themselves a Christian first and an Anglican second.

Maybe answers and being right is about being in control.

There is a Buddhist story, the Buddha once said to imagine someone is trying to show you the moon by pointing to it. The pointing finger is what guides you to the moon. Without the finger you might not notice the moon. But the pointing finger isn't what matters most. It only matters because it helps you to see the moon for yourself. Which is why the Buddha also warns us not to mistake the finger for the moon.

So, if we're not careful, we argue about the fingers pointing at the moon, and miss the moon itself. We argue about our understanding of our relationship with God and forget that we are using time space language to explain God who is beyond time and space. This means our understanding and conceptualising is at least incomplete it's not wrong.

This calls us to respect and have respect for each other where we've come from and who we are. We can have differences, but they don't have to divide.

The image of a wheel comes to mind. We start our spiritual journeys somewhere around the edge of the wheel with God in the centre. So, the object is the travel towards the centre towards God. It doesn't matter where around the wheel we start the closer we get to God, the closer we get to each other. this may mean both taking

on new understanding as well as letting go of perceptions which not only keep us from getting closer to God but also each other.

Does this mean we are to express answers to any of the tough questions in life? It reminds me of the warning and admonition at parties the three taboo subjects are sex, politics, and religion. There are others as well.

Maybe with Jesus is saying is not don't talk about those things, find a way to talk about them in calm and respectful ways. Jesus is warning us of the danger, that there will be divisions but that's not the last word.

Maybe it goes back to something like I said before. About the church north of Montreal which had a sign on the door which said Jesus is the answer. What comes to mind when you hear that? What is the question? This means we don't have to protect Jesus or God. We can trust that we will get to the answer at some point, but we don't need to rush. So, it's about truly listening to each other. And who knows we may learn something from someone with an entirely different perspective than ours.

I think it was my mother who said wouldn't life be boring if we were all the same?

Amen

May the God who shakes heaven and earth,  
whose Spirit blows through the valleys and the hills;  
whom death could not contain and  
who lives to disturb and bring us life;  
bless us with the power to endure,  
to hope and to love. Amen.

(Source: [Elizabeth Raine](#))