

Turn on the light

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor
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1 Kings 19:4-8; Psalm 34:1-8; Ephesians 4:25 - 5:2; John 6:35,41-51

I read this once:

Judgement is turning on the light in a dark room.

That's all, just turning on the light.

The light turns on ... and we are known.

Allow me to turn the light on to our readings today. There is a lot there that is rather well hidden.

John chapter six. Brian gave us a lot to chew on last week.

The whole chapter has been leading up to today's bit, and it is horrifying.

"53 Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

We can understand these words in various ways; translate them into ritual... we do it every time we take communion! Then we get the next verse; v 54.

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood...

eat...; it's a crude greek word for eat. This is the chapter where it is used most. It used to refer to animals eating. gnawing, biting, chewing... Why is it used here?

Perhaps to emphasize how real the idea is....

He is talking about real food, real chewing, real flesh and blood. not just meat and drink. The whole person (flesh and blood) is being talked about...

but it is offensive, people turn away. (Rebecca will get that scene to work with next week!) it is a scandal...

this isn't just a eucharistic discourse!

but before we go there lets turn the light onto the Old Testament reading!

did you notice that we have skipped a large part of chapter 2 in 1Kings?

the bit that we do get though has "2:12 So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established." ...his kingdom was firmly established...

well, not quite, there is some establishment still to do. a bit of cleaning up.

previously...

David was clearly weakening, (and the vultures were gathering?) so his eldest son had proclaimed himself king.

But David heard about it and set Solomon on his throne instead. Solomon had pardoned Adonijah, and the focus was on a dying David.

now, (the bit we miss) Adonijah comes to ask for Abishag, the Shunammite, and somehow he has crossed the line. Was it asking for David's concubine that was the problem?

Again, look at the effect of this request. — Adonijah's death... There is something big here. Not just a virile male asking for a sexually desirable young woman. I suspect that this was a claimant to the throne seeking to establish his own kingdom by proving the validity of his earlier claim.

Ancient Near Eastern potentates can no longer rule if they are impotent. Sexuality and power are closely related!

So, Solomon establishes his kingdom. The blood that flows, his brother Adonijah, Joab, the strong man of David's reign, Shimei... well it's all there, you can read it if you want to!

It's not much different to what we see on our news bulletins these days either. Kingdoms get established in blood. Often the blood of babies and children. This is a shockingly human story! Do we choose sides? I think we do, but it is confusing, and as Australians we know people from every "side".

Surely, if ever we were in need of redemption it's now!

let's return to the gospel and try to turn a light onto that.
eating flesh and blood.

Cannibalism. a very real taboo.

Why did cannibalism ever happen? I am not talking about plane crashes in The Andes and extremes which break down social norms. Anthropologists tell us that eating one's enemies brought coherence and unity to the group that ate together. We understand that part. It defines who our enemies are, it defines who "we" are.

We define our unity by eating together all the time, Sunday morning, special occasions... with food and drink, with the sacrament...

But the enemy being eaten... that then defines the group. This enemy is NOT us, not one of us... and can be eaten. There is an inner and an outer. An enemy that can be chewed and spat out. An "other" that can be annihilated.

I preached a few weeks ago and Rebecca had had her first experience of not being able to do something (in another denomination) because she was a woman. Rather shocking for a younger woman these days! (which is refreshing in itself!)

And I said that since Rob left this pulpit all of our preachers were in some way unclean. (I won't turn that light on).

A friend (a gay biblical scholar in another city) commented to me: We are all unclean
We are all unclean. Of course we are. Turn on the light, and we all have parts of our lives that we don't want examined. There are small rooms in our houses that we go into and shut the door. ... we are all unclean

And Jesus is telling us to share a cannibalistic feast of flesh and blood???
but it is his body. ...

He is the enemy who was killed... yes, Jesus was often ritually unclean. He did it all the time.

He is saying something else. Not just ritually unclean, but the enemy

He became sin... who was no sin...

He is the outsider, the enemy

there is no "in" and "out"; no "us" and "them"

talking about the catechumenate....

If we are going to be inviting people to "come and see" who we are, it is important that we do it without hoping that we will make our own in-group bigger. there shouldn't be "christian" and "non christian", fundamentally we aren't a group to be defined over and against "the other". But a gathering which welcomes all.

If confirmation is a way of marking a person as being "in", then it does the wrong thing. If we take the body and blood of Christ and think that is saying that we belong, there is something wrong.

This is not to say that we are not different at times, but we are not enemies because of our differences!

We can value and enjoy the things which make us different. Not use them to define "us and them".

Judgement... (the word is not condemnation)... judgement is turning on the light in a dark room!

Come Lord, and be with us, in the breaking of the bread...

Twenty four hours later I thought that the conclusion could well have been: there is no *them and us*; there will be differences! There will be conflict. But it is within the family; within the society; we deal with conflict in the home, in the courts. Killing people is dealt with by the law. It is either accidental, perhaps manslaughter, or murder...

Some references:

From the [Girardian Lectionary](#) site

This site has some amazing and wonderful insights into the readings of the day. Rene Girard was a French philosopher who had the insight that Jesus was a scapegoat. (that is how I understand it) and this way of understanding the work of Girard has influenced many fine biblical scholars. There's [an excerpt from an essay by Paul Nuechterlein](#) entitled "Holy Communion," Contagion, Spring 1996, pp. 216-220. I only read this on Sunday night. (after preaching) It is a useful statement of Girard.

Rebecca mentioned Girard in a [recent sermon](#).

I copied some Girardian references in a Good Friday reflection which (I think) is at [Good_Friday_2005r4.html](#).

Other books used included Kittel's TDNT and Kubo A Reader's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament. (both of which biblical students should know and use!) and Raymond Brown's Anchor Commentary (but not followed!)