

Let's tell a better story

The sermon preached by Rev Dr Michael Paterson on 29 September 2019

To many people, what Christians do on Sundays is old-fashioned, uncool, and well past its sell-by date.

And yet, after the ugly scenes of MPs screaming at each other in Westminster this week, I have spent the week wishing we could fast forward to Sunday, and truly longing to be here with you this morning.

Because I think that what we are doing here today is radical, I think it is outrageous, and I think it is truly revolutionary.

Our public life this week has been full of the language of disdain, of traitors, of enemies, of surrender and of capitulation.

But have you noticed just how much our service today is full of the language of love, of forgiveness, of belonging, of peace, and of hope for the future?

Human beings have always sorted themselves into factions, into those who believe like us, who think like us, who behave like us. And for much of the time it's pretty harmless: you support Hearts, I support Hibs; you like opera, I like Motown; you think he's handsome, I think you should go to Specsavers.

Of course there's a place for people and groups we agree with, but I am really worried that Brexit has taken us beyond that to what one writer has coined 'common enemy intimacy'.

And common enemy intimacy works like this: "I don't know you, in fact I don't have the slightest interest in getting to know you, but I'm glad that you hate the same people I hate, and I'm glad you hate the same things I hate."

And that's why I think what we doing here together this morning is absolutely radical, absolutely outrageous, and absolutely revolutionary.



Because, when the world's story pushes us to call people enemies, what could be more **radical** than God's story? that Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn are my brothers, Jo Swinson and Nicola Sturgeon are my sisters, and that we are family under one Father.

And, at a time when the world encourages us to view others as traitors, capitulators, and zombies, what could be more **outrageous** than God's call to leave the comfort of our seats to wish each other peace, irrespective of whether we voted leave or remain?

And, at a time when propagandists on both sides want to scare us into believing that there won't be enough to go round unless we vote for them, what could be more **radical** than to kneel in humility at this communion rail, where one loaf will be broken, one cup shared, and no one will go without?

And so at this crisis point in our history, I think that we who call ourselves Christians need to come together more than ever to do three things: to sing, shake and share.



Because there's nothing like singing to remind us of the power of our belonging together. There's nothing like reaching out to people who are not a bit like us to wish them peace, real peace, deep peace, to remind us that we don't have to fuel divisions but that we can heal them.

And there's nothing like kneeling at the communion rail with people we would never spend time with the rest of the week, to remind us that, when push comes to shove, we **all** hunger and thirst for a fuller and better life, not just for ourselves, but for each other and for our world.

So, while the world repeats history, and tries to drag us into war, let's tell a better story and let's go on singing, let's go on shaking and let's go on sharing.

Old fashioned? Irrelevant? Past its sell-by date? I don't think so. Amen.

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