

Meditation , (Aug 5, 2018) , Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal

Bimal Thambyah

Let us pray :

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight – our strength and our redeemer? Amen

The story is told of an incident that happened in Paris during those early days when surgery was still in its beginnings and anesthesia was not known. Two doctors were conversing together in a hospital about one of their patients who looked like just an ordinary peasant. They conversed in Latin, as they did in those days. One doctor said to the other, "The only thing to do is operate", to which the other replied, "Yes, and even if anything goes wrong, there is no one to question us. He seems to be a man who has no relatives or friends." The patient, who was a monk, and who understood Latin perfectly, turned on his side, and looked at the doctors and said, "Jesus died for me."

John of the Cross in one of his meditations puts these words into the mouth of Jesus: Jesus says to him, "When I was hanging on the cross, I thought of you and shed one drop of blood for you."

That is what I am, I am a sinner for whom Jesus died. I am just one of those who has been loved by God in Jesus at the cross. That is the central truth about me all the rest is peripheral.

- *D.T. Niles , Preaching the Gospel of the Resurrection*
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Nowadays we often hear people say something like this ; "all paths are true and we all end up in the same place."

Personally, I don't argue about this anymore for the simple reason that I have not gone to "heaven" – at least not yet.

But I know something that is absolutely true, we who come to worship here on Sunday mornings week after week, month after month, year after year have come along very different paths. How this has happened is a real mystery. If someone said to me when I was a teenager I would end up at MFM - I would have had a lot of questions . Mennonites? , Canada ? , Montreal? etc.

Today's theme is the scriptures The monk in the story was obviously well versed in the scriptures.

My earliest memory about the Bible was when I was around six or seven years old – I heard this story from one of my school teachers

In my country at the time hardly anyone had telephones – so people just showed up. One person who just showed up was a Minister (pastor)or sometimes it was a deaconess or a catechist.

Can you imagine what it would be like if someone from the church just dropped in to your place unannounced.

In my culture at the time you were obligated to drop everything and attend to them.

In the story I heard, a pastor had just dropped in to have a prayer meeting.

But for one problem - he had forgotten to bring his Bible along - so he was given one .

When he opened the Bible a comb fell out and someone exclaimed -"we have been looking for that comb for years !"

I am a Tamil - Christians are a very tiny minority in my country. The Hindus seldom refer to us as Christians the more common word is "Vedakarar" which means people who read the scriptures.

The theme for today is the scriptures – we are using a guide called – the Leader Magazine (Worship resources , Practicing faith by Alissa Bender)

This is the fifth Sunday in the series in the summer .

On a personal note, I always knew that reading the scriptures was important but it has not always been easy for me to settle down and do some serious reading. It always seems to get crowded out! But I try Maybe that is what the Bible describes as -"spiritual battle."

Of course all this means that we know how to read. Even in a sophisticated, advanced, country like Canada ,Adult literacy, is a worrying statistic.

Four out of ten Canadian adults have literacy skills too low to be fully competent in most jobs in our modern economy.

Scripture is important but it is not some sort of magic. To get close to what it is trying to say it has to be read historically, allegorically and existentially

In allegorizing, anything can come to mean anything else

Reading historically is an attempt to find out as accurately as possible – what actually happened.

But this is not enough!

The Bible must be read existentially. This means that when I open my Bible to read it. I take my stand before God – since in its pages God is speaking. If I obey I enter into fellowship with God – This is life. If I disobey or refuse to listen I cut myself off which is actually death. So either way it affects my very existence. (A series of Bible Studies , “ Today” by D.T. Niles)

In my opinion in affluent countries, we have so much choice that we are deluded into thinking that we are making the right choices. We are free, apparently, and this freedom is guaranteed because we have a strong military, police etc. Let us not fool ourselves Canada is very much part of it not necessarily only the country south of the border I know , because I have worked in the aerospace industry and enjoyed its benefits - albeit for a short time.

So Do we give up? - I hope not. We are expected to be ; salt, yeast and light in a highly complex world.

Which in essence means a very complicated existence

I am very fortunate that over the years I have been exposed to the Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Quaker, the United Church and now the Mennonite traditions.

(I am Ecumenical .)

In some reading the Gospel takes a special place during worship in others the first thing that happens is a Church official walks in with the Bible - places it on the altar and opens it . etc. ... in others a person walks in with some incense and lights a candle.

We may say - well this is all ritual and we may be right

In my tradition reading the Bible is considered very important. But when it becomes magical? It actually becomes a burden - one cannot be too careful.

As for myself, when I lost my job, reading large chunks of the Bible was a source of comfort.

To conclude some trivia.

The Bible was translated into my language, Tamil, in the 17 hundreds

You may be interested to know that it was prior to being translated into for example Russian , Chinese or Japanese . Eerdmans' Bible Hand Book puts it even prior to Norwegian

When I casually pick up the Bible and start reading it It's only a matter of time before I realize that it is actually reading me.

It has life, the words are not dead what has been your experience with the Bible?

Amen

Order of Worship

Welcome to the Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal

Visitors ?

Greet your Neighbours

Gathering hymn: STS 106 comme un souffle

Call to worship:

Creator God, we gather together, in community,
to seek your presence and to worship you.

We come seeking the heart of Christ, so that we may love as you love;

We come seeking the mind of Christ, so that we may learn wisdom;

We come seeking the Spirit of Christ, so that we may be filled with the fruits of the Spirit.

Move in our midst, fill our hearts, enlighten our minds, touch our spirits, we pray,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn: STJ 27 God of the Bible

Old Testament Reading:

Hymn: STS 95 Jesus has done so much for me

New Testament Reading:

Offering:

Dear God, we thank you for the gifts of creation and for your love and grace. Everything we have comes from you. We are yours. Accept these gifts we bring today and bless them to your service. Amen.

Children's Story:

Meditation:

Hymn: HWB 421 Blest be the tie that binds

Sharing of joys and concerns

Congregational prayer:

Announcements:

Sending hymn:

Benediction:

Go in the peace and joy of Jesus Christ .