



Go Deeper, 4th December 2022 "We wanna be together!"

As we move through Advent, this week we looked at prophets. Paul's prophetic call to the Roman church to collaborate with God in building unity with each other across real divides asks us how we might begin to overcome any divisions in our community.

- How do you feel about praying for others? How do you feel about having others pray for you? There is often a disconnect – we'll happily pray for to others, or serve them in many ways, but wouldn't want to disturb or be a bother. Research shows that people are always more happy to help than we think, and our opening up and vulnerability consistently brings us closer together. How much of our wants and needs are we prepared to share?

I was struck by this quote from Jennifer Vija Pietz, writing in the Working Preacher article mentioned below. Speaking of the unity we find when Christians in communities seek to build up their neighbours, even when it means suspending our own rights or privileges, she says...

This is how Christians of diverse backgrounds and convictions can glorify God by living in harmony with one another (15:5–6). Seen in context, Romans 15:4–13 thus presents both a challenge and a word of hope to Christians today. It is much easier for many Christians to truly accept people who vote like them or hold the same views on controversial social issues than it is to intentionally develop mutually edifying relationships with believers who disagree on such matters. It can be difficult to suspend one's preference for a "traditional" or "contemporary" style of worship in order to praise God in harmony with others who have different preferences. And it may feel awkward to invite people over for dinner who do not share one's socio-economic or citizenship status. But this is precisely the type of other-oriented love and acceptance that the gospel not only calls people into, but also empowers.

- What differences are you aware of between you and anyone else, those you might believe to be wrong about something, or something that's simply a preference? How could you work with God towards being truly united with them, as equally beloved children of God?
- Who feels excluded from Church life here – which people or types of people?



Finally – here's an optional tough question –

- what might you be wrong about?

I hope you find this all challenging, I know I do. My prayer is Paul's: May the God of hope fill ~~you~~ us with all joy and peace in believing, so that ~~you~~ we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Every Blessing

Rob

Deeper Stuff

Jennifre Vija Pietz's article in Working Preacher (where I often get help!):

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/second-sunday-of-advent/commentary-on-romans-154-13-6>

Romans for normal people, by J R Daniel Kirk.

<https://thebiblefornormalpeople.com/books-for-normal-people/romans-for-normal-people-book/>

I have found this enlightening. This is well worth a read if you want to understand Romans – the most misunderstood and misquoted book in the new Testament, apparently!

The book comes from the team behind The Bible for Normal People, a great podcast and a growing series of commentaries. The Podcast creators and hosts discuss the book with the author here:

<https://thebiblefornormalpeople.com/episode-225-daniel-kirk-romans-isnt-what-you-think-it-is/>