

Thursday, July 27, 2017 - Day 207 – Ecclesiastes 1-3, Psalm 19, Philippians 4

Ecclesiastes 1-3. The book of Ecclesiastes appears to be rants of a gatherer or teacher of wisdom. It is often ascribed to King Solomon, the richest and wisest King Israel ever had. What we read in this book is an acknowledgment of the powerlessness of human beings in the big scheme of how this world operates. Acquiring great knowledge and vast wealth in the end amount much of anything to boast or write home about. Human beings are insignificant mortals who do not have any say or control over life. The teacher in the end acknowledges the sovereignty of God, who determines all that happens with humans and creation.

Psalm 19. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." I often say this verse right before I preach. I do so because I acknowledge the inadequacies of my words and ruminations, especially as I say it from the pulpit. It is a prayer. Pray that God would take them and convert them into the message that people need to hear in the here and now of their lives. I also acknowledge that whatever I preach to the people is also for me. There is much revelation of God in the natural world we live in. Natural world we live in is God's incarnation. Preachers serve as mediators of the message revealed and proclaimed in the natural world.

Philippians 4. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This is another biblical verse I use regularly in church at the close of a worship service. In fact, this chapter in Paul's letter to the Philippians contains so many beautiful, touching and loving verses that could be used as blessings. The church in Philippi, a church Paul helped establish, was undergoing some internal division and disharmony, which made Paul while in prison concern. The intent of this letter was to bring the disagreeing factions together and to smooth over their differences. Division among a group of people causes absence of peace. Just as it was true with the Christians in the church of Philippi, so it is with us today in our churches. The differences we may have among us really matter very little compared to the message of Christ that unites us. How can we be witnessing community to the world when there is division among us? We need peace. And that's Paul wishing for the church in Philippi and in our own communities.

By The Very Rev. Koshy Mathews