

“All Things Are Yours”

Philippians 3: 20-21, 4: 4-7 1 Corinthians 3: 16-23

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All Saints' Sunday

The city of Corinth was a center of commerce. A gateway city -- lots of traders and sailors coming to do business.

People of Corinth did not like the Romans occupying their land. They expressed their displeasure by dumping their chamber pots on some visiting dignitaries. The Romans responded in the usual restrained Roman manner: They burned the city to the ground. Their version of urban renewal.

Then Caesar rebuilt the city but brought in people from other parts of the empire more friendly to Rome. Corinth became an important cosmopolitan city. As densely packed per square mile as downtown Chicago. One ancient writer described Corinth as a city: completely without grace or charm, coarse, disgusting, with a distain for the poor.

These coarse people from different backgrounds, countries and cultures Did not like each other. But had to live in close proximity. So each group clustered together with their own kind. Huddled together against those other people.

Paul came along, and planted a church. The problem was, pretty soon, The church was acting just like the society around them. Paul's church has a problem. Which may sound familiar to us. The problem, simply put, is exclusion. You could also call it narrowness of focus, or reductionism. You could also call it bigotry.

You can see it reflected in Paul's letter. Each group followed the leader that was most like them. One group said: "Paul is our guy: he's progressive, he really tells it like it is!" The traditionalists said: "You know, Paul never actually met Jesus. Remember, only Peter actually saw Jesus. We're following Peter and the true Tradition!" The society folks were yet another group. They said: "Apollos! Apollos is an academic with a silver tongue. Obviously a graduate of a Big Name Eastern University. We follow the orations of the intellectual."

Corinth Church ended up with a series of competing theological camps, each functioning to keep the other groups separate. These separate theological camps were in actuality just mirror reflections of the outside society.

In a world where people have always found one way or another to cut themselves off, to clamp down on any renegade notions of reality.

The clamped down church of competing ideologies, functioned to make life narrow, boring, conflicted and grumpy.

Into this context Paul says: "Friends, why all this silly wrangling? What would happen if we were to take the Holy Spirit seriously? Let the Spirit move among us, and we will discover that with God, All Things are Possible."

Into this world of clamped-down competing theological camps Paul brings the revolutionary wisdom of Jesus.

He says: You are missing the point of God's good creation. There is not just one point of view. You have something to learn from everyone.

Because: All things are yours.

It is as if you have gone to the movies, and left after the first trailer.

You are missing the big picture!

It is as if you enrolled in the University, but you have just been taking the same course again and again and again. Christ calls us to take all these classes,

To cross register across fields and disciplines, not just in University, but in the great multiversity called Life.

When we do this, we feel the power and the passion of God.

Like the poet William Butler Yeats said: "Education is not filling pail; it is lighting a fire." So when you go to church can you hear Paul singing to you: "Come on baby, light my fire!"

"Christ challenges us to enlarge our lives and enhance our world; to engage and enmesh and enjoy ourselves in the garden of God's good creation."

All things are yours.

Our lives are not threatened: they are positively transformed by people who are different from us. As we claim God's wisdom in that, then we have to take the risk to go out and embrace people of difference, and learn from them.

All things, and all PEOPLE, are yours.

Charles Adams makes a great distinction in this: the distinction between owning and possessing. We just think we own things.

You may own a car, but never drive it.

You may own 3 houses, but never really live in any of them.

You may own a bank account, but never do anything truly useful with it.

You may own 10 Bibles, but never hear see what it is truly saying.

You may claim a life-long faith, but never risk using it.

All things are NOT yours to OWN.

On the other hand, you may not own something, but you may possess it.

In the midst of a hurricane, you may possess peace of mind.

In the midst of an overwhelming situation, you may possess an energizing sense of hope. In the midst of one of life's great conflicts, you may possess the peaceful sunset over a perfectly still Minnesota lake. You may possess:

The power of Beethoven's 9th,

The music of David,

The dreams of Barbara Kingsolver,

The poetry of Maya Angelou,

The courage of Nelson Mandela,

The strength of Christ,

The power of the Holy Spirit

And the love of God.

You may possess them because all things are yours.

In appreciation and response to this vast blessing, we, in turn, must resolve

That we will not engage in or support any organization that is narrow, judgmental, bigoted or prejudiced in its beliefs, belonging or behavior."

Nobody possesses the whole truth of God. No one sees the whole truth of the divine. No person, no church, no denomination, no doctrine, no religion, no political party, no organization. No country.

They all have insights. Some deep and profound. Some dangerous.

It's up to us to learn to tell the difference.

Wasn't it Garrison Keillor who said: "The purpose of an undergraduate education is to keep you from getting snookered?" In that same light, one key purpose of Christian faith: to keep you from getting snookered about life. As the scripture says: "Whatever is good, whatever is just, whatever is right, whatever is true.... Think about these things." Think about them learn from them. Learn something from everyone.

If Paul has something to say, learn it.

If Peter has something worth hearing, listen.

If Apollos has insights, lend him your ear.

All things are yours.

Now follow that trajectory.

If philosophy has something to contribute, embrace it.

If mathematics can explain something, master it.

If sociology can reveal something, open your eyes.

If poetry can probe the mysteries of life, reach out.

If science has something to teach you, especially about climate change,

Learn it.

If feminist theory can open doors to half the human race, turn the handle and walk right in.

If Jewish history can open up insight through incredible aches and atrocities, learn it.

All things are yours.

I have a principle that I find helpful in understanding the Bible:

“Thou shalt not reduce what God has made complex.” As Saint Paul’s #1 son, F. Scott Fitzgerald said: “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”

The multiverse of God’s good creation is not a drab monotony of sameness,

But an astounding variety of amazing difference. In Christ, all things are yours.

Not to own, not to hoard, but to share.

If all things are yours, then the problems of the world are ours.

For the last month, House of Hope has been providing Homeless families with shelter, food, security, and hospitality. We do so because this is a church that believes someone else’s problems are our opportunities:

To turn despair into HOPE

To turn night into Day

To turn hate into LOVE.

Our faith in Christ Is the gift we have to give to the world. In Christ, we show the world that we have the power to welcome the outsider, to care about the outcast, to love our enemies, to speak truth to power.

It is our gift to possess the world. Not to dominate it, but to deliver it; Not to exploit it, but to enrich it, Not to own it, but to LOVE IT. All things are yours.

We have been given the gift of money, which is a form of power. A Bank account is like a battery. If we hoard it, the battery will die and corrode. If we use it, we discover we have great power. It will not last forever. But we have THIS TIME, RIGHT NOW, TO USE IT. It is a gift God has given us: All things are yours.

The Bible is not a pipeline to individuals alone, it is an ocean of mystery to swim in TOGETHER.

Every Sunday playing organ, Aaron reminds us, we don’t live in a one note world.

Every Sunday Sophia and Matthew remind us, the divine mystery of God

Is best experienced, not as a solo, but a choir.

As we give to the church, this congregation of great generosity sings songs of Faith, Hope and Love until those harmonies turn into reality.

We make a promise when we fill out a pledge card. Not a promise to a business or a lawyer, corporation, but a promise to God: that in the coming year, we will order our priorities, we will mobilize our will, together with all the other Christians in this church, to synergistically use our power together and transform the world.

All Things are yours. That pledge card you got in the mail is yours, to help you order your priorities so that, in a world tearing itself apart with divisions, we can be part of God's world-transforming love.

All things are yours.

The past is yours, learn from it.

The present is yours, fulfill it.

The future is yours: transform it.

The Bible is yours: believe it.

Science is yours: master it.

Truth is yours: Know it.

Disease is yours: heal it.

Cancer is yours: cure it.

Climate change is yours: Turn it around!

Injustice is yours: vanish it.

War is yours: stop it.

Homelessness is yours: house it.

Racism is yours: end it.

Violence is yours: Transform it.

The world is yours: Love it.

Time is yours: Use it.

Death is yours: Expect it.

Jesus is yours: trust him.

Eternal life is yours: claim it.

Heaven is yours:

We will meet there because

All things are yours.

And you belong to Christ.

And Christ belongs to God.