

**Sermon: 6 June 2021,**

**Te Pouhere**

Isa 42:10-20; 2 Cor 5:14-19; Jn 15:9-17

***May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be now and always acceptable unto You O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.***

This was the first topic I preached here after I'd been inducted three years ago. At the risk of becoming an apologist for cultural separation, which I do not wish to be, I thought I'd do a bit of a recap.

Our Anglican history in New Zealand has always been that of a divided church. Following Samuel Marsden's first sermon at Oihi on Christmas Day 1814, CMS missionaries ministered among Maori people in the north, preaching the gospel in ways they found relevant to what they found in various parts of the country. Maori people too, took the Word to other parts of the country through their oral tradition.

Settlers however, brought with them a liturgical model that closely resembled a remote branch of the Church of England with all of its stratified hierarchy and the inverted seasonal complexities. The explosion of immigrants after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, significantly altered the balance between the two, and henceforth the Anglican church in NZ became dominated by British traditions and moreover, by clergy ordained in Britain.

Our first constitution, drafted and signed by Bishop Selwyn on 13 June 1857 at St Stephen's Chapel Taurārua, in Auckland, was a progressive document in its day. Key decisions required the assent of all three houses; lay folk, clergy and bishops, a first in the whole Anglican Communion. Regrettably however, Selwyn showed no interest in including Maori traditions or aspirations in the mix, as required by the Treaty of Waitangi, despite the fact that it had been signed only a few years before. The missionary model CMS had applied among the Maori people was quickly displaced, and some would say that we have

been struggling to identify what it means to be Anglican in New Zealand ever since.

Rota Waitoa was the first Maori to be ordained in 1853, but even then, Selwyn delayed his ordination by several years because of fears that he would "*return to his Maori ways*" once he was installed among his people. It wasn't until 1978 that the church finally agreed to formally establish Te Pihopatanga o Aotearoa, giving Rt Rev Manu Bennett, a constitutionally equal voice in the House of Bishops. His father Rt Rev Frederick Augustus Bennett had been appointed the first Maori Bishop in 1928 but his office was that of a suffragan (assistant) to the Bishop of Waiapu.

The radical constitutional development of the late 1980's therefore, intended to bring about true partnership between the two main *tikanga* or cultural strands, recognising that we had not made any meaningful progress in the previous 140 years. Without putting too fine a point on it ... we had ignored and disregarded our Treaty obligations, to the considerable disadvantage of our only partner. We are not the only ones; even central government has repeatedly and egregiously failed the Maori people. The church has, at last but not without considerable internal angst, said that enough is enough.

In the last thirty years or so, we have made progress in many areas. But you don't have to look too deeply to see that there is still a long way to go. On one hand, we are beginning to see Maori views being represented in the organisational work of the church ... but the property assets/ number of churches held in Tikanga Maori do not remotely compare in number or value with those in Pakeha communities, and the only stipended clergy in Tikanga

Maori are their bishops and Archdeacons. Is this what we mean by true partnership? On what basis might we reasonably draw such conclusion? How would we feel if the situation was reversed?

All is not lost. Bishop Richard of Te Waipounamu has been invited as a speaking partner to all of the Christchurch Diocesan Synods that I have been present for, and he and his staff recently attended the Clergy Conference in Hanmer and made several very meaningful contributions. There are also further initiatives under consideration that will hopefully redress these imbalances in due course.

Here in Geraldine, Hugh and I have for some time, been discussing holding a regular mid-week Holy Communion in Te Reo, and about including the Lord's Prayer and Creed in our regular worship from time to time ... maybe it's time we stopped talking and just did it. I am not however, just interested in tokenism.

I have in the past, used various images to highlight the issues: one end of a waka sinking, and one corner of a house subsiding are good illustrations of how a problem for one part of our community is a problem for all of us; and I have talked about our Constitution being a post to which all our cultural waka are bound together. But it seems to me that our gospel today tells the story best:

*"As the Father has loved me so I have loved you; abide in My love ... I have said these things to you so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete ... you did not choose Me, but I chose you ... go and bear fruit" (John 15: 9-16).*

Our relationship with Jesus and with God our Father is, similarly with the Treaty of Waitangi, an *unequal one*. In His covenant with us God has promised to love us and care for us *as His own* ... asking only in return that we love Him and love each other.

Our joy becomes complete ... *ONLY* becomes complete ... when we do His will ... when we love our friends and neighbours *as He loves us*. That doesn't necessarily mean surrendering our physical lives in martyrdom ... but that we demonstrate what a great relationship with Jesus actually looks like ... *joyful and complete* ... by the way we treat others, just because they exist ... whether or not they go to our church.

We as a nation, a couple of years ago made a point to the Muslim community in New Zealand that "they are us" when they faced unspeakable injustice as they gathered for worship. A noble ideal, but what if we extended that ideal to include our Treaty partners in every aspect of our lives?

*Te Pouhere* ... was a radical idea at a critical time in our church life, but we still have some way to go to bring the key principle about as was originally intended. There are some people who think that our church established a potential model on which the whole country might work more effectively, but I don't think God wants us to be divided at all. However, if this is what it takes to give Maori an effective voice at every level of decision making then let it be. I don't really care how we reduce inequity and intolerance across our social and cultural spectrum ... as long as we do. Jesus tells us that we will not be complete until we put Him first and live first for the joy of His Father's love. I pray in hope that we can at last in whatever way possible "become complete."

**Amen.**