

# Twenty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost 6 November 2016

[Haggai 1:15b-2:9; Psalm 145: 1-5, 17-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:1 5, 13-17 ; Luke 20:27-40](#)

[Proper 27C / Ordinary 32C / Pentecost +25 Nov 6, 2016](#) from Textweek

We are familiar with many earth-shattering new insights that have given us a new view of the world and have also changed who we are and who we know ourselves to be.

Throughout the evolution of humanity we could list hundreds of examples of enlightenment that have given new paradigms of the world, life and our place in the whole scheme of things.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC Pythagoras enlightened us with a spherical model of earth. Much later in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Nicolaus Copernicus formulated a model of the universe that placed the Sun rather than the Earth at the centre of the universe. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Albert Einstein developed the general theory of relativity, one of the two pillars of modern physics; and called into question much of the accepted teachings of Sir Isaac Newton who is widely recognised as one of the most influential scientists of all time.

The three writers of today's readings also had enlightened insights and yet they are still waiting to be realised as 'earth-shattering'.

Perhaps that is because the weight of religious tradition is a formidable force that impedes, even rejects, change, and so also impedes a new understanding and an evolution beyond the understanding it self-righteously and fearfully hangs on to.

In the first reading Haggai gives voice to an enlightenment that is much later reiterated in Christ:

    "I am with you, says the LORD of hosts",  
and  
    "My spirit abides among you; do not fear".

Haggai speaks 520 before Christ and he speaks of Emmanuel and of Pentecost, and yet even today his own tradition is left waiting for a Messiah; left with an understanding and an expectation that predates Pythagoras, Copernicus and Einstein and over 2000 years of evolution, new insights and new understandings.

The second reading, attributed to Paul also betrays an insight that has been suffocated by a past and primitive tradition.

Paul has experienced the real enlightenment of Christ, the scales have fallen from his eyes, he has been enlightened by Christ's revelation, but now we read him reframing that experience to fit in with his tradition and the tradition of his audience; the Messiah they hoped for and found in Christ, is now reframed into one who must come again. What ever happened to the enlightenment of the disciples when they were clearly told that 'greater things than these you will do'?

It is as if they just cannot let go of the tradition, they cannot evolve and make real the new understanding they have received.

And if we are to give this reading its contemporary understanding, that is read it as if it applies to today; then Paul is writing off as 'deceivers' all who have had insights since he previously spoke with the Church in Thessalonica; and specifically those who declare

"that the day of the Lord is already here";

and that would include Richard Rohr who many read and appreciate, myself and many others.

Imagine if we retained a scientific understanding that wrote off Pythagoras, Copernicus and Einstein as deceivers; the earth would be flat and we'd all be afraid to go overseas; maybe it is that un-evolved stance that drives our governments to stop the boats!

The gospel reading is even more interesting for it addresses the question of 'resurrection'; again remember we are looking at a nearly 2000year old explanation.

Luke is providing his audience with an argument for belief in the resurrection and he uses a simple example; and then goes on to refer to the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament that even the Sadducees hold to, he tells them

"And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

However, Luke, like many Christians today, still is thinking of the resurrection as a 'life after death' experience; even Luke himself misses the very enlightenment that is an integral part of his argument;

"Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive".

Within Luke's own argument, an argument for life AFTER death, lies the reality that 'resurrection' is a living reality

"he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive".

Rather than 'resurrection' being another version of a second coming, something to be hoped for and that we can therefore just wait for; it is an enlightened reality, a worldview in which we live out our Christ-likeness.

Earlier this week Richard Rohr posted the following in relation to the activity of 'creation':

"The common Christian understanding that Jesus came to save us by a cosmic evacuation plan is really very individualistic, petty, and even egocentric. It demands no solidarity with anything except oneself. We whittled the great Good News down into what Jesus could do for us personally and privately, rather than God inviting us to participate in God's universal creative work."

The quote is equally applicable to the general un-evolved understanding of resurrection.

Earlier this week I received a request from a student from Notre Dame to provide some pointers for an essay they had to prepare on the topic of "Faith and Reason" and how this often debated theological/philosophical dynamic informed their particular course discipline.

It was a good question coming from a Catholic university, and yet like all major religions today the one outstanding quality they all share is of being 'unreasonable'.

When we look at the evolving movements in our world today, we see: Brexit, Donald Trump and our government's latest headline policy; "*Turnbull says 'door to Australia is closed'*".

These are all 'conservative', traditionalist, tribal movements that look back to a time of splendid isolation, a time of SELF-righteousness and a time when the 'other' was to be feared; they are un-enlightened and un-evolved positions; and they also reflect the overall stand of all major religions that also hold on to primitive un-evolved understandings.

We can choose ourselves to remain in the dark, to believe that Christ will come again, and so there is nothing I need to do, and we can believe, or is it hope, that all will be well in the resurrection, that splendid time after we are dead.

And if we accept that position, then let's accept also the increase in tribalism that comes with it and be ready to defend our borders whatever they might be.

Or we can listen more deeply to Haggai, we can wrestle as Paul wrestled, and we can catch the insight that Luke seems to have missed:

"I am with you, says the LORD of hosts",

"My spirit abides among you; do not fear".

We can fully embrace the now that is implicit in the statement;

“Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living”.

The whole revelation of Christ is earth-shattering, it is more than Pythagoras, Copernicus and Einstein combined; but it is only made real when it is lived and that means change just as every other earth-shattering enlightenment has brought about change.

So give it some thought... we can carry on and die as per our tradition or we can embrace the reality of the gospel:

“Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.”

Peter Humphris