

## Lent 4: REFRESHMENT

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Kaiwaka, Sunday 06 March 2016

2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Luke 15:11-32

[MW16-08]

In some older lectionaries and church calendars

- this Sunday, the fourth Sunday in Lent, was given a particular name "Refreshment Sunday"
- does anybody have any idea why the Church Fathers, in their wisdom called this day "Refreshment Sunday"?

[space]

The season of Lent is based on the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness

- unlike Jesus though, we have a "timeout" each week every Sunday is a "feast day", a celebration, not a fast and so not counted as part of the forty days of Lent
- and yet even more unlike Jesus, we have a break a kind of "half-time"
- Lent is a long time and today is the "midway point" halfway through ...

So today is a chance to relax, stretch our legs, have a breather ... metaphorically

- to splash cold water on our faces ... still metaphorically of course a chance to spend some time in the shade, to feel the breeze kick off our shoes, put our feet up and be refreshed

If we think of Lent as a journey from Ash Wednesday to Easter

- then today we get off the train or coach to take refreshments

"Refreshment"

- what is the first thing you think of when I say "refreshment"???
- what does it bring to mind, what image or picture do you see ...
- take a moment or two and talk with those around you

[share thoughts etc.] ... a story about "refreshment"

Shortly after World War II came to a close, Europe began picking up the pieces. Much of the Old Country had been ravaged by war and was in ruins. Perhaps the saddest sight of all was that of little orphaned children starving in the streets of those war-torn cities. Early one chilly morning an American soldier was making his way back to the barracks in London. As he turned the corner in his jeep, he spotted a little lad with his nose pressed to the window of a pastry shop. Inside the cook was kneading dough for a fresh batch of doughnuts. The hungry boy stared in silence, watching every move. The soldier pulled his jeep to the curb, stopped, got out, and walked quietly over to where the little fellow was standing. Through the steamed-up window he could see the mouth-watering morsels as they were being pulled from the oven, piping hot. The boy salivated and released a slight groan as he watched the cook place them onto the glass-enclosed counter ever so carefully. The soldier's heart went out to the nameless orphan as he stood beside him. "Son, would you like some of those?" The boy was startled. "Oh, yeah - I would!" The American stepped inside and bought a dozen, put them in a bag, and walked back to where the lad was standing in the foggy cold of the London morning.

He smiled, held out the bag, and said simply: "Here you are." As he turned to walk away, he felt a tug on his coat. He looked back and heard the child ask quietly: "Mister, are you God?"

"Refreshment" is a noun which comes from the verb "refresh"

- my dictionary states very obviously and very obviously and very importantly that "refresh" means to make fresh again
- refresh further means to make cooler, stronger etc. as by food, drink or sleep to replenish, as by new supplies to revive
- "refreshment" is something that refreshes

So, let's see what I've brought in my back pack ...

- thermos flask
- a cookie
- water and a Bible
- a Bible?  
yes a Bible, because the readings today are about "refreshment"

Recall what St Paul wrote in his 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Christians in Corinth:

- *Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new. (5:17)*

Do you find it easy to forgive and forget?

- when someone upsets you, offends you, when you have an argument with someone or they really annoy you ...
- may be you can forgive and continue your relationship with that person but can you forget?!
- I sometimes find that very hard  
I find I forgive the person, but remember the incident
- refreshment in our first Bible reading tells us that God is not like that  
God is not like us: God forgives *and* forgets

"God does not keep an account of sins" Paul writes

- God is concerned only to make us his friends  
God sent Jesus to make peace between himself and us  
God, through Christ, changed us from enemies into his friends

Ever heard a person say something along these lines:

- I lost my wallet and someone handed it in, and it still had fifty dollars in it  
it's refreshing to know that there are still honest people out there
- ever heard anyone say anything like that?

In the same way, I think it's refreshing to know that:

- God is making all people his friends through Christ  
gives us hope, encouragement  
refreshment

God says, no matter what happens I will always be your friend

- this is how you can be my friend  
and we, having been made God's friends, can go out and make friends with people  
and help them see God reaching out to make friends with them
- refreshment indeed!

Then we come to the parable of the father who had two sons

- a story we probably know very well  
so let's try to look at it from a different or "refreshing" point of view
- consider it from the point of view of "refreshment"  
what can we say about refreshment in this parable?  
what is refreshment in this parable?

Any thoughts???

In my backpack are some possible "refreshments" from that parable

- they are a bit different from the first ones I took out ...

Here's an open purse and a blank cheque

- *the father divided his property between his two sons*  
God is generous and trusting  
God gives us gifts and leaves it up to us as to how we use what we are given

Then there's this sachet which makes a rich gravy

- *he would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating*  
something to make ordinary food tasty, exotic, special
- God is able to transform everything  
God can make every person's life something new, exciting and special

And what about this – a novelty bar with a heart on it!

- *the father ran to his son and hugged and kissed him*  
how could the father welcome back his wayward son?
- because he had been waiting, watching, hoping for this moment ...  
because he loved his son
- God is like that ... like a parent, waiting  
always ready to welcome back his people  
because he loves them

There's also this: "Contract and Terms for Renewed Sonship"

- *the son said: "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you.  
I am no longer good enough to be called your son."*
- the father, though, placed no conditions on his son's return  
(tear contract in half)
- the wayward son was not given the role of servant  
nor did he have to payback the money
- God's way is reconciliation, acceptance, love ... no strings attached

And of course, plenty of this – “party food”

- *get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate*  
all are invited to God’s banquet
- and it’s good to know that whenever anyone turns around or comes back  
it’s a cause for great celebration

Plus ... a lemon!

- because the oldest son did not see it that way  
*the older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house*
- this looks like all the refreshment the older brother is able to receive

Some birthday candles

- as the father tried to explain to his older son  
it was the beginning of a new life for the younger son:  
*your brother was dead, but he is now alive*

New life, refreshment, even for the older brother

- if he takes the key and enters the house  
*my son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours*
- hope for all!  
no one needs to be shut out ...  
even if we have locked the door ourselves ... God still gives us the key

Last but by no means least: music (hold up song lyrics)

- *the older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house,  
he heard the music and dancing*
- let’s refresh ourselves and relax after all this thinking and concentrating  
as we hear Amy Grant singing “The Prodigal”  
with its theme ‘I’ll be waiting’ (lyrics on the song-sheet)

[Play song]

God’s love refreshes

- God’s love is refreshment!

Today God says to you:

- Come to me. Return to me. Trust me. Relax in my love  
For I love you as you are  
and as you will be.

Let us pray:

*God of grace,  
when we come to our senses like the prodigal son  
may we turn to you again and again  
and know the depth and richness of your mercy;  
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.  
Amen.*