

Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church

“The End and a New Beginning”

Scripture: Daniel 11:36-12:4; Romans 8:18-25; Psalm 76 general refrain 11

Hymns: Jesus shall reign where’re the sun 275; Lord, the light of your love is shining 376; Those who wait on the Lord 662; Rejoice, the Lord is King 267

November 23, 2014

Rev. Steve Filyk

If you watch the news

Or read the paper (online or printed)

You’ll be aware that we are currently
in a season of protest.

While the umbrella revolution in Hong Kong

seems to be winding down,

Demonstrations in Mexico are ramping up.

Students in England are also on the march.

Of course there is also activity much closer to home.

You’ve probably heard about Ferguson, Missouri.

Back in August an unarmed black teenager,

Was shot by a white police officer,

Which led to protests, some violent.

The city is filled with tension

As they await to see

whether that police officer will be charged.

“[This past Wednesday] night,

a few dozen demonstrators returned to the streets,

some chanting: “Indict that cop,”

as they gathered outside the Ferguson police station...

They were faced by officers in riot gear.

Police say five protesters were arrested

when they refused orders to disperse

and lay down in the road instead.

One of those detained overnight was David Rodriguez...

a former cable company worker from Chicago

who said he came to Ferguson three [day earlier]

to show solidarity with the protesters.

[He told the media that the police “] were going around

pretty much looking for anyone they could grab...”ⁱ

Maybe you’ve been keeping tabs on Ferguson.

Of course most of us are aware of protests

Even closer than Missouri.

As close as Burnaby Mountain.

Kinder Morgan wants to expand its Trans Mountain pipeline

And bring more oil, including diluted bitumen,

to the west coast.

But not everyone likes this plan.

Protests have sprouted up

Disrupting the survey work

The company needs to complete.

So the company obtained a court injunction

to keep those protesters away.

This past Friday “Kinder Morgan crews [returned]

with a police escort, after RCMP moved in on Thursday

to remove protesters

from an encampment blocking the work site.

Trucks loaded with equipment arrived in the dark hours of the morning

and police officers were standing guard.

RCMP said that 26 people were arrested on Thursday

and five people remained in custody.”ⁱⁱ

One of the more difficult arrests was that of Jakub Markiewicz,

Who had climbed 10 meters up a tree

And secured his neck to that tree with a chain.

Bolt-cutters were needed to remove him.

Now you may not believe in either the approach
Or the cause these protesters,
But I think we can all admire their courage.

They are not afraid to take a stand
Against what most people consider immovable forces:
The law, big oil, entrenched racism.

I mean how many of us
No matter how righteous our cause
Would consider taking on our own neighbours, let alone
the fourth largest energy company in North America?

How many of us would keep parading
Down the city streets
If the city police showed up in riot gear?

It's interesting to recognise that we,
people of faith,
Are rather cynical about the future.

Yes most of us vote.
But even then we aren't convinced
that you can't really change the order of things.

We have accepted that there are powers
That are firmly entrenched
and cannot be opposed.

And so we won't protest.
We've accommodated ourselves to the status quo.
'Honey—what's on Netflix tonight?'

Now a selective reading of Scripture
Might confirm this apathetic outlook.

Just consider the book of Daniel.
We've already heard about a succession
Of cruel and tyrannical kingdoms,
Having their way with the world.

Last week we heard about one king,
Likely Antiochus Epiphanes IV,
Who profanes God's temple
And tramples God's people.

And today we hear more of the same.

We hear about a king 'who does as he pleases'.
At first it sounds like Antiochus,
But as the story continues,
This ruler makes Antiochus seem like a schoolgirl.

"The ruler will be blatantly anti-God...
[magnifying himself and doing] what he desires
among the nations he dominates.

He will worship the god of military power
and will rule with ruthless disregard
for the people under his authority.

He will pursue his enemies with oppression,
terror, violence and death."ⁱⁱⁱ

This king will oppress God's people
Like they've never seen or even imagined.

Daniel has a vision of the end of time.
It's not a pleasant vision.
It speaks of a reign of evil, completely unopposed.

Maybe this is the reason
why we never still our necks out?
The stories of the Bible ground us
And keep us realistic about human nature.

We are not naïve.
We know that the forces of evil are strong.
So we keep our noses clean
And our heads down.

But while the forces of evil are strong,
This is not the end of the story.
This is not the end of the story.

Daniels dreams and visions always end up
With God being victorious.
And God is always revealed
to in firm control.

Yes evil is given a long leash.
Injustice does have its moment.
But every ruler and kingdom
that opposes God's good reign
is doomed to finally and utterly fail.

We see this in that dismissive obituary
Written for that 'king who does as he pleases':
"Yet he shall come to his end,
with no one to help him."^{iv}

The one who had conquered nations
And oppressed God's people
Is "wiped off the stage of history
in a mere six Hebrew words."^v

All to help us recognise
Who is really in charge...

If you listen to the complete Biblical witness
You will hear that yes, "Evil is real;
its power in the world cannot be underestimated.
Tyrants will [do wicked things
And cause great suffering for God's people.]

[But you will also hear the good news
that] evil cannot finally overcome good.
God is the ultimate victor.^{vi}

Hearing this complete witness
Makes it inappropriate for us
to be cynical about the future;
makes it unsuitable for us
to be afraid for taking up the cause
of justice and righteousness.

For we of all people,
Know the trajectory of history.
We know we are heading towards God's good end.

And so we CAN oppose environmental degradation,
We CAN fight against racism,
We CAN battle against materialism and militarism.

For some this may mean climbing up a tree
And defying a court-injunction.
For others their opposition
may be channelled within the system
working for a new consensus,
for better arrangements.

If we consider Daniel's lessons,
We will need to realise that there is a cost
to any real opposition.

We may find ourselves in a dark alleyway
surrounded by hungry lions.
We may end up in a boardroom
Where the heat is turned on high.

Whatever the case we have the assurance
that our faithfulness will be vindicated.
God wins. God wins!!!

In one of the videos from Burnaby mountain
A protestor spoke to the cameras as she was being arrested.
She said: “we can do this
and transition into a clean and just future”.

I was struck by her optimism.
An optimism that in my mind
Is likely fueled by her youth and naiveté.
But an optimism nonetheless,
That was expressing itself in activism.

ⁱ Scott Malone and Daniel Wallis “Police arrest protesters as Ferguson awaits grand jury decision” November 20, 2014 *Reuters*
news.yahoo.com/ferguson-braces-finding-shooting-unarmed-black-teen-044312927.html

ⁱⁱ Tiffany Crawford and Tara Carman “Kinder Morgan crews arrive to resume work on Burnaby Mountain after Thursday confrontation, arrests (with video)” *Vancouver Sun* November 21, 2014 10:47 AM

So what might God accomplish
through a people who are wise,
who are rooted in Biblical realism?

May we cheerfully oppose those powers that be.
May we take our stand
for the kingdom that has come,
and is coming.

And may we “shine brilliantly,
like the cloudless, star-strewn night skies”.^{vii}
Amen.

www.vancouversun.com/news/Pipeline+protesters+return+Burnaby+Mountain+despite+arrests+with+video/10398631/story.html#ixzz3Jv3MJDZ

ⁱⁱⁱ Douglas Connelly *A Deeper Look at Daniel* 160

^{iv} Daniel 11:45 NRSV

^v David Ralph Davis *The Message of Daniel* 160

^{vi} W. Sibley Towner *Daniel* 177

^{vii} Daniel 12:3 MSG