



**The Induction of The Rev. Lindsay Hills and  
the Celebration of a New Ministry  
St. Mary's, Kerrisdale June 20, 2018**

**Romans 12:1-18**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds...let love be genuine...Hold fast to what is good.”

When you preach as much as I do these days, you have to find ways to nourish your engagement with Scripture in more meditative ways, and you have to give yourself permission to play. Both of these things together (at least for me) help me open myself to Scripture in the writing process. God only knows what it does for those listening to what I come up with!

So tonight on this important occasion—the celebration of a new partnership between one Lindsay Hills and the parish of St. Mary’s Kerrisdale—you-re going to get some of both—the fruit of this person’s engagement with what I regard as a very important piece of Scripture, and I just a tad of mischief, just a twist or two to help bring this piece of Scripture alive for us all tonight.

And so, for instance, this last Sunday in the Gospel of Mark you heard of the Parable of the Mustard Seed, didn’t you? That tiny seed that when planted produces a hardy bush in which the birds of the air can nest, just like that in the kingdom our tiny acts of justice and mercy can produce results larger and more vigorous than we would have ever imagined. But have you heard of the Parable of the Gnat who, though tiny, can join with others of its kind and cause something much larger than itself to move against its own will?

And I’m sure from the season of Advent you remember Jesus’ story of the seven wise virgins who stayed awake and with their oil lamps guided the bridegroom to his destination, suggesting that it would be good for us to stay awake and be ready for the coming of the kingdom. But do you remember the lesser known story of the seven wise soccer players who not only stayed awake and vigilant during the game but who worked together as a team to prepare the way for the ball (that is, the kingdom) to break through and reach its goal.

And finally tonight you certainly are familiar with Paul’s Letter to the Romans. But have you ever heard of Paul’s Letter to the Kerrisdalians? Yes, the Kerrisdalians, God’s beloved who worship in the village of Kerrisdale, a group of people who on this important occasion, might be especially interested in insights and advice from the Apostle Paul, the apostle who cared so deeply about and had so many opinions for communities of faith.

This kind of play, of course, can be good fun. But with Paul’s Letter to the Kerrisdalians, we have the opportunity tonight not just to imagine a brand new letter from Paul to all of us here but to hear the specific passage chosen for tonight and imagine that it’s actually addressed to us, to the Kerrisdalians as we celebrate a new partnership between parish, incumbent, archbishop and others in the wider diocese.

But, as luck would have it, my friends, this is a little complicated because our passage for tonight, Kerrisdalians Chapter 12, Verses 1-18, is something commentators call a “hinge” passage, that is, its meaning rests upon all the chapters that came before it. The fortunate thing about this, however, is that all of Paul’s rhetorical twists and turns, all of Paul’s “on the one hand this and on the other hand that” in the first eleven chapters boil down to one important idea: Our God is a gracious God who in Christ secures our worth, gives us dignity, saves us and preserves us. This means that we do not secure our worth and dignity ourselves. It is God who creates these for all of us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This may sound like old news to some of the Kerrisdalians here tonight. But is it really? Have we ever really internalized that at the most fundamental level all of us are standing on a foundation of worth and dignity that we did not create but that was created for us through God in Christ? Have we ever really internalized that we cannot earn our worth because our worth is given to all of us as a generous gift right from the heart of God? And following from this, can we ever really comprehend that we, ourselves, do not create unity among us all, for our unity with each another has also been created through Christ?

And so I wonder, where do we Kerrisdalians need to rest in this gracious gift of worth either individually or collectively? Are there some of us who, for instance, need to stand down from proving our worth and stop taking up so much space or stop protecting the status we believe we have? And are there others of us who, emboldened by a new awareness of their worth, need to stand up and be heard?

And then there's the Church in Kerrisdale as a church community, as a collective. How might internalizing our worth affect us as a whole? Will it result in reassurance that, though the clergy presence in recent years has seemed like a bit of a revolving door, that this parish and its people are of ultimate worth? Or is it this? That this parish as a parish of ultimate worth doesn't need to be anxious about potential failure but can spend its energy experimenting with new ways of being and action in service to this neighbourhood and to this city.

Which finally leads me to the actual passage from the Letter to the Kerrisdalians that we heard tonight, the passage describing the behaviors that rightfully flow from those whose worth and dignity have been secured by God in Christ.

Listen, Kerrisdalians, for what the Apostle Paul is saying to us all about how we are to treat each other and those outside this parish as this new partnership begins. Let's do this as call and response.

Let love be genuine.  
Hold fast to what is good.  
Love one another with mutual affection.  
Outdo one another in showing honor.  
Be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.  
Rejoice in hope, persevere in prayer.  
Do not repay evil for evil.  
Contribute to the needs of the saints.  
Extend hospitality to strangers.  
Live in harmony with one another.  
Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.  
Do not claim to be wiser than you are.

I wonder which of these behaviors naturally flow from the worth given to you by God in Christ and which of these behaviors will be more of a stretch and will require intentionality? I wonder which of these behaviors are already wired in this parish as a part of its positive DNA. And, to return to our little bit of fun, I wonder which of these behaviors will require the kind of collective persistence and work from us all that Jesus describes in the Parable of the Gnat or the kind of vigilance and teamwork from us all found in Jesus' story of the seven wise soccer players.

Tonight is a splendid night here in this splendid place—a place of great beauty, a place of a goodly heritage, a place of many gifts, a place of astounding potential. But all of it, its earnest engagement with God in Christ and its play, its good works for the life of the world, its efforts to work with God in building itself up, are meant to be grounded in one thing—that God in Christ has secured dignity and worth for us and for all humanity, a dignity and worth none of us creates for ourselves. And God invites to us to live out that dignity, worthy to stand before God and one another, and ready to act.