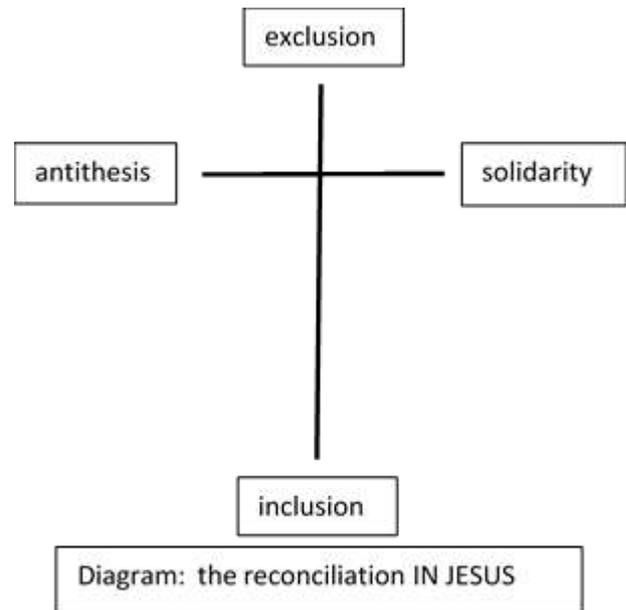


THE ESSAY re ICON ENTITLED; 'ALL WHO LIVE AND BELIEVE IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE'

OUR LADY OF KĀPITI SCHOOL,
3 Presentation Way, Paraparaumu

Antithesis and Solidarity (4)

1. Genesis 7 v. 1,7,15,16
2. Acts 27 v. 14 – 26; 39-44



With reference to the above readings, could I draw your attention to two verses taken from each of these accounts;

ad 1) 'and the Lord shut the door of the Ark'

ad 2) 'and behold, God has given you all those who sail with you'

The differences that are suggested here raises questions about the two very different ways in which God deals with crisis situations that involve both believers and non-believers. In the Genesis account the believers are appearing as protected by God and secure in their futures, the unbelievers are facing a very different prospect. The ones in Genesis face death, the unbelievers in the Book of Acts however are spared death and instead face survival, life and a future.

A first view is based on the theological idea that the Ark represents a special definition or metaphor of the Church. God closes it's door after he let everyone in whom He allows to enter because of their righteousness. Consequently, this takes place at the exclusion of those who by their behaviour and lifestyle have practised lawlessness and may have implicitly er explicitly rejected God's law or revelation of His will at that time. Living without divine law may have led to a lifestyle of acting-out human nature without accepting or seeking human or divine modification. Ultimately, they ended mocking Noah. And than, God had enough.....

God closes the door of the Ark so in addition to distinction there is now also a separation between the ones that have responded in obedience to divine law, the believers, and those who have rejected this and have violated His law.

This looks at first sight like a black and white approach; all or nothing. From the Genesis text it is clear that there are no gradated solutions on offer that would qualify specified 'unlawful' behaviours and/or disobedience in degrees that had offended divine law requirements. Levels of severity of forms of unlawfulness are not mentioned either. For those on the outside, lost and facing death there does not appear; A second Ark with limited survival prospects that provides more liberal entry criteria for those who present with only medium troublesome behaviour or A seriously leaking third Ark with even lower survival prospects for those who see no reason to cease their violence, greed and selfish behaviours or An already heavily listing fourth Ark about to founder before new land has consolidated with its' roof missing to be boarded by those who foolishly feel that the things God is AGAINST are far more attractive than the things that God is FOR..... One would think that these options could have provided some justice for all.....

There is pluriformity enough, mind you, within Noah's Ark, especially evidenced by the animals. This nauseating pluriformity is likely to spill over into some fierce fights, animals eating each other's food, eating each other, squabbling over territory. Here we might recognize a parallel with the catfights as well as bloody fights that we have seen over the ages within the Ark of the universal church. The snakes trying to assassinate the bunnies would draw

opinionated reactions as they do today. The powerful still find it hard to share the power and resources they received from God for the sake of justice and peace.

Meanwhile, Noah's Ark remains safe and secure; the snakes do not find a back door and the roof proves itself watertight. And any other Arks collecting those sporting various degrees of lawlessness are not turning up in the Biblical text.....

In this Genesis account the God of all creation performs like a church warden; he closes the place securely and those who are in, are in. The waves outside and challenges inside can not change anything either. Neither does Noah nor any of the believers inside let anyone take away from them that they are 'in'. They would have talked about those they know and who are now 'outside'. And, Noah and his tribe and animals are unable to know or to decide who were and who were not fit to enter; who will live and who will die.....
God closes, but Noah and his families pray for those 'outside'. Is that a prayer after God's heart?

Apart from sailing in the Ark, we are sailing in the boat of St Paul. That is the boat in which 'the world' is also sailing. We are finding Paul standing confidently alongside the anxious, the privileged and proud, the self-righteous, the wise in their own mind, the ones in denial, the ones who have made a god after their own image and likeness, the indifferent, the ones with ego's the seize of a small planet, the dodgy ones, the bewildered ones, the ones given to lies and deceit, the ones who lost having a heart a long time ago, the ones who try hard to find the truth, the ones who are lovers of peace, the selfish ones, the ones who are humble and kind, the ones who are hurt, the ones with the money, the ones without hope, the reasonable ones, the opportunists, the sick ones, the lonely ones , the ones who have a lot to hide, the ones who do not know who they are, the dishonest ones, the desperate ones, the ones who watch Paul and listen to what he says. And Paul stands confidently alongside all these 276 people whom God loves and he is representing yet another metaphor of the church.

In this sinking boat he represents the minority of believers in God so that, at first, people do not take notice of what he says: what would HE know? This prisoner, this criminal?

We will remember the similar response that Noah was given by the lawless ones in Genesis.....

At this time of crisis and in the face of death God is with Paul and believes in him.....

Paul prays and talks with the men in the boat; he talks and prays.

Paul stands in solidarity with the lost and unholy ones: their predicament is his predicament and now his prayer must be their prayer. He is just as scared as they are. But, he has decided to pray and trust God. That's all.

believes FOR them. And God is with him as he prays. And he asks God for their lives.....

He literally asks with all of his power for 'a merciful gift' (GK; kecharistai) Paul asks this gift not for himself but for THEM.

All of the 276 souls on that boat survive in the midst of total mayhem. (ref. Acts 27 v. 41-44)

Nobody who is preoccupied with the act of God closing the door can deny this. And the text reads loud and clear; 'And everyone reached land in safety'.

So what do we have: God closes the door of the Ark. Nobody can enter anymore. NO second chance. Not a political half-chance. No compromise or change of plan. Those inside the Ark are saved: the ones on the outside are lost. This is the ANTITHESIS that God is prepared to practice.....

the metaphor given in the Book of Acts the believer, the church, and the unbeliever, the world, are both in the same boat and they are saved together. This speaks of SOLIDARITY.

In Paul's boat, his intercession on the basis of compassion leads him on to speak and ask. reply, God speaks and gives. We see the resulting inclusion of those lost souls in a wonderful event that shows that the God Who closes the door is also willing to open it in a gift of salvation for these souls.....

And what about Jesus? What does He do? What does He say?

He both preserves (Mat. 5 v. 17 -20; Joh. 17 v. 12) AND adds to His church (woman at the well; murderer at the cross)

In Him, preserving and adding are taking place with perfect confidence, in seamless harmony, peaceful.

That is possible because Jesus reconciles all four realities (ref. Diagram top first page) WITHIN HIMSELF.

Our initial question; What happens with those who believe and those who don't is answered IN JESUS. The answer is not found in reason or wisdom or in a statement of revelation or in a theological construct. It is found in a PERSON. And that PERSON, JESUS CHRIST, is the Saviour for those who are lost.

May we be able to have Jesus do His saving work both in this world and in the house of God that is the Church.

Johannes Sijbrant Paraparaumu January 2017