

## Waitangi Day

Readings: Isaiah 58:1 – 12, Matthew 5:13 – 20

Historian Keith Newman quotes a “prophetic” teacher who said publicly that “The time for endless forgiving is over. For Maori: Get over it, we are now one people, one nation.”

I recall a song from 1969 –

What we need is a great big melting pot  
Big enough to take the world and all it's got  
And keep it stirring for a hundred years or more  
And turn out coffee coloured people by the score”

In its day, that song celebrated multiculturalism and racial harmony. However, today it is totally inappropriate. The lyrics are racist and the premise just doesn't work.

Do we actually want to be all the same; even if we could?

Racial diversity is celebrated in Scripture. There is a beautiful picture in the Book of Revelation. People from all nations and cultures worship the Lamb together. (Rev 7:9 – 10)

We will all worship together but not as one homogenous mass. (Isaiah 2:3, Micah 4:2) God loves culture; God has nurtured our diversity throughout history.

Throughout history God's people have been tasked, to go to the nations and spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. God has commissioned his people to seek the good of those people; that doesn't mean making them all the same.

We all look at life through a pair of tinted glasses. Those glasses affect how we have interpreted life as a whole, how we view other cultures, how we perceive our history.

Keith Newman reports that ‘The best history is written when the dust settles, when vested interests aren't so loud and better information allows us to see the past in context.’

As children all we heard was history from the European perspective. Then Maori voices began to be heard as justice was sought for wrongs carried out by Europeans.

Justice is close to God's heart; arguably closer even than worship. Our passage from Isaiah is one of some many Scriptures, where worshippers are told to stop their outwardly pious behaviour and to focus on doing justice:

...the kind of fast I want is that you stop oppressing those who work for you and treat them fairly and give them what they earn. I want you to share your food with the hungry and bring right into your own homes those who are helpless, poor, and destitute. Clothe those who are cold, and don't hide from relatives who need your help. vv 6 – 7

...stop oppressing the weak ... v 9

Feed the hungry! Help those in trouble! v10

Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you shall be as bright as day. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy you with all good things, and keep you healthy too; and you will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. vv10 – 11

Most missionaries took justice for Maori seriously. In the 1830s they were concerned about intertribal warfare, harmful European influences such as alcohol, immorality, and the increasing demand for land by the new settlers. John Dunmore Lang, a Presbyterian minister, argued for ‘Christian and energetic Government’ to introduce law and order to protect Maori.

A response; Te Tiriti o Waitangi, was signed in 1840. But there have been Treaty difficulties, mostly around interpretation of Kawanatanga. Maori interpreted it as 'governance'; Pakeha as 'sovereignty'. It was never the intention of Maori people to surrender their right to self-determination.

Some people say the Treaty is now defunct. But from a Christian perspective the Treaty is not just a contract; rather it is a sacred covenant.

Historian Claudia Orange notes the missionaries' involvement in the Treaty:

The role of the English missionary in determining Maori understanding, .... It determined that Ngapuhi, in particular, would understand the treaty as a special kind of covenant with the Queen, a bond with all the spiritual connotations of the biblical covenants; there would be many tribes, including the British, but all would be equal under God.

'Equal under God,' she writes. That has clearly not been the case. Land was stolen, promises were broken, injustices carried out! And the results are plain to see today.

Keith Newman reckons that some of our difficulties can be blamed on making heroes of the wrong people.

Nelson came about through the Wakefield Company. The founder Edward Gibbon Wakefield, developed his theories of colonisation while serving a term at Newgate Prison for abducting and marrying a teenage heiress. He was a business man out to make as much money as he could.

Surely better heroes exist. Wiremu Tamihana Tarapippi Te Waharoa for instance. This man had vision and courage and was renowned as a peacemaker among iwi. On recognising the threat from the rising Pakeha population to Maori, he was a leader in forming the King movement in the late 1850s.

His vision for New Zealand was for a country of Pakeha and Maori at peace with itself but in which Maori remained in control of their own destiny.

Pakeha interpreted the King movement as a threat that could prohibit British sovereignty over the land.

Though Tamihana tried to mediate, a large British army invaded the Waikato in 1863, driving the King and his followers away. Then they declared Tamihana and the Waikato tribes to be rebels and confiscated 1.2 million hectares of their territory.

Tamihana still argued eloquently against the injustice. Much later, the Crown admitted it had breached the Treaty of Waitangi. In the 1990s it apologised unreservedly for "the loss of lives because of the hostilities arising from its invasion, and the devastation of property and social life which resulted".

Tamihana's greatest achievement, the King movement, still exists, having played an important role as generations of Maori argued for redress and recognition.

His vision, of a Maori society in control of its own destiny, under a system of Maori law, working in partnership with Pakeha law, and participating in the benefits of Pakeha settlement, is still valid.

Some years ago, I was a tiny cog in making way for a National Maori Budgeting Network, alongside the Pakeha organisation. It was very satisfying and equally frustrating. Most Pakeha did not see the need for it. I suspect Pakeha are fearful of difference and intolerance can result.

Our differing cultures shape everything. Neither culture is wrong; we are simply different. And that is good. We have much to learn from each other.

So where do Christians sit in all this?

Jesus' words from Matthew's Gospel are haunting:

You are the world's seasoning, to make it tolerable. If you lose your flavour, what will happen to the world? v13

Jesus goes on to say:

Don't misunderstand why I have come—it isn't to cancel the laws of Moses and the warnings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfil them ... Every law in the Book will continue until its purpose is achieved. ... if anyone breaks the least commandment and teaches others to, he shall be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.vv17-19

All the justice commandments for the alien, the widow and the orphan still hold today. All of those injunctions are encapsulated in Jesus' commandment to 'love our neighbour as ourselves'. The broad interpretation of neighbour is revealed in the story of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25–37)

So how do we love our Maori neighbour? How are we to be salt to the world? How are we 'the world's light—a city on a hill, glowing in the night for all to see?' vv15 – 16

Reconciliation is key! In my very simple brain reconciliation requires these things:

1. An awareness and acknowledgement of past injustice -

If the Church wants to make things right, 'truth-recovery' is essential. If reconciliation is our goal, we must listen to the stories that retell the Treaty betrayals; painful though that is.

2. Repentance for those injustices

In 1997, Vision New Zealand, an 'umbrella' organisation of mainly conservative evangelical and Pentecostal churches, expressed their desire to honour the Treaty. There was no joint statement to that effect but the gathering did have a time of confession, whereby representatives of various groups expressed sorrow and repentance for past failures.

3. The making of restitution – financial and of land – just as the Waitangi Tribunal seeks to do
4. A clearer understanding of the 'other'- how are we doing with that?

Our Anglican church endeavours to endorse and support Maori Tikanga and that of Pacifica with our three Tikanga structure. That structure arose primarily so that Maori could move forward in their own way without being dominated by Tikanga Pakeha.

What do we know of our Tikanga partners? A little info:

Many of you will have heard that Tikanga Maori Archbishop Brown Turei died recently. Bishop Richard writes this:

...he served the Church as a Priest for over sixty-six years and, as a Bishop, for twenty-four years. Archbishop Brown was a man of huge integrity, wisdom and humility. ... widely respected. ... passionate about the relationship between the three Tikanga within our Church and provided a strong, but quiet, leadership within that partnership.

More recently Archdeacon Richard Wallace became new Bishop of Te Waipounamu (South Island) at the marae in Akaroa. Richard and Mere were Maori Missioners within our Diocese before moving across to Mawhera (the West Coast) to work within the Pihopatanga of Te Waipounamu.

The Nelson Maori Mission is lead by Archdeacon Andy and Ramiri Joseph. They worship at Victory Community Centre and at the church on the marae in Motueka. Most Maori priests are like Jean – volunteers.

I had no idea how to conclude this sermon. I know little about Tikanga Maori; and I know fewer Maori than I would like. I am the poorer because of that.

I long for a greater understanding and love for our Tikanga Maori brothers and sisters, and for those who suffer now because of past and present injustice; for our church to be more multicultural than it is. I'm praying for moves in that direction

Whenever we meet one person face-to-face  
or kanohi ki te kanohi  
which captures the deeper meaning of, 'person to person' or  
'in our humanity',  
then meaningful relationships can be forged and walls broken down.