

St. Margaret's Uniting Church Mooroolbark

Sunday 1st April, 2018 – Easter Day

GOSPEL READING Mark 16:1-8

NEW TESTAMENT READING Acts 10: 34-43

REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURES

Tampering with the ball? Well, that's just not cricket!

I've been an interested observer of the ball tampering affair. It seems almost everyone has an opinion, and few are scared of sharing them. For my own part, cricket is a game I have loved and played all my life, and I can't understand how someone can take sandpaper to the ball to gain an advantage.

But I wish there were outcry about other things.

I saw a meme on Facebook this week. For those unfamiliar, the word 'meh' means, 'whatever, I don't care, it doesn't matter to me.'

The meme was titled AUSTRALIA:

Tampa: meh

Children overboard: meh

Offshore detention: meh

Deaths in custody: meh

Indigenous health gap: meh

Environmental destruction: meh

Workers ripped off: meh

Ball tampering in cricket: OMG WE HAVE LOST OUR WAY WHAT HAS BECOME OF US?

Friends, I think we have lost our way, but it was long before cricket did. I think cricket has simply burst the bubble on perhaps our final hope that something was fair, honourable, real ...

Because it is not just cricket that's wrong with the world.

What about fake news?

What about our politicians who never give a straight answer?

What about the banks? – they've been exposed these past few weeks as money talks more than morality.

And then there is Facebook and others who sell our personal information to manipulate the common good.

At least we had cricket to look to, something that existed in some imagined state of purity. Until this last week that is.

There have been many thoughtful insights into the malaise of our current world. In short, all these things have something in common – that 'it's all about me'. There was brief mention about Liberalism on QandA last Monday, and Stan Grant has written an excellent article about it as well. To summarise, the failed world that was post World War I and the Great Depression has pushed the rise of the individual. It is all about me, and who cares about anyone else. If it's about me, then it's about what I own, and what I can get or earn.

It means that Australian cricketers might be playing today for the national team, but in a few weeks many will have lucrative contracts in the Indian Premier League for franchises that are foreign to me. And then there are the advertising endorsements. So much money to make if you play your cards right. Our cricketers have become guns for hire – to the highest bidder, or to become the greatest in whatever infamy they seek.

But it's everywhere. Whatever you think about Donald Trump, he has made it in this world. He doesn't need to be a good President. No one can take away from him that he is the President of the Free World, or at least the USA! It doesn't matter what he tweets, he is wealthier than most people, and he has a former model (1992 runner up "Look of the year contest") standing by his side. By most standards, he is top, he has made it.

In a similar manner, those who work for banks see success in \$. And Facebook is just like the rest of them – out to make as much money for

minimum effort. It's no wonder that leads to manipulating election results. But none of it matters if it's all about me, and I'm sitting on top of the pile.

Today's events from the gospel of Mark could not be further from the hedonistic world of Neoliberalism. Whatever temptation there had been to make Jesus into a leader who would overthrow the Romans were gone with the events in an Upper Room, a garden, a courtyard, a hill with three crosses, and a tomb. Jesus chose not to look after number 1, even though he struggled with what he was facing. His willingness to face and endure was actually because he was modelling the great love of God that says all are important.

In the story of an empty tomb we catch a glimpse of this. Despite all that is broken, a path of redemption awaits. There is but a simple instruction: *Go to galilee, the Lord will meet you there.*

Galilee is the place of redemption because that is where it all began. Broken, scattered, scared, betraying, denying disciples will be called anew, afresh. There just a few witness the risen Lord. Those few found forgiveness and commissioning as they were invited to become the body of Christ together. As we hear from the book of Acts, they ate and drank together as signs of salvation and new life.

And this is good news.

It is good news for you and I today, but it is also good news for a world that has little to hope for now our cricketers have dropped the ball.

For the antidote to the drive to be #1 and only think of me, is in fact community. It is community that helps us remember *when one part of the body suffers, we all suffer*. It is community that considers the needs of all, including the needs of our planet, compared to the insatiable drive to the top. It is community that reigns in the attitudes of cricketers, or banks that think they are above the law. It is community that creates a force against all who act against the common good.

The resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, calls us into the only thing I feel is hopeful for our world. It is community but it is far

deeper than that. Today, like those few witnesses in Galilee, we meet at the table to eat and drink together. Here community becomes communion. Communion is life. Communion is a place to belong. Communion is a place to dance with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Communion is the place we see that God loves each of us, and for that we are all joined together. In communion, we experience and embody the risen presence of our Lord Jesus Christ for the sake of the world.

Doesn't this world need more communion and connection? Perhaps then we will be more outraged about those who suffer like Asylum Seekers, because they are part of us. Perhaps we will be people who welcome those ostracised as cheats, because they are part of us. Perhaps at this table, the insight into God's reconciling love and life will invite us into places that care less about tampered balls and more into sharing the love of God with all.

Let us eat and drink together, for the Lord is here, and here life is to be found. Here we discover, Christ is Risen. He is Risen Indeed.