

Borg and Crossan: *The "First" Paul: Radical Apostle of Jesus* ~ 2009 June 15-18
(21 states, 3 canadian provinces)

Opening Meditation:

"...without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers...I have longed for you that you might receive some spiritual gift to strengthen you..." Paul, the Apostle, Romans 1:8-11

BORG Lecture One: Introduction and Foundations

"Paul has been praying that someone might like him!" Borg

"church alumni association" – a la Spong! – those who used to be in church and are no longer...

Introductions: category 1

- name: Sharon
- where I'm from now: Angelus Oaks, near Big Bear in southern California
- where I grew up: Hemet, CA, about 30 miles from where I currently live
- denomination I grew up in: CC(DOC)
- denomination I am now: UCC
- one other thing about me...: 1 husband, 1 son—pilot for JetBlue, 2 cats

Introductions: category 2

- what's my impression of Paul? childhood pastor, John: 1 Corinthians, especially chapter 13: all about love! Seminary: someone to steer clear of! misogynist... sexist... narrow-minded... stubborn... haughty... the gospel would have been better without him... Now time to check him out again...

Borg: "The Radical Paul: Intro and Foundation"

- help equip us to educate others about this material: pastor, teacher, leader, conversations!
- Paul's importance: ½ of NT concerns him; his letters (written in 50's) are the earliest christian testimony
- when teaching Paul: good to begin with people's impressions
- Note: use of term "heterosexism" instead of "homophobia"—lady from another conference: "the issue is not that they are afraid of us...the issue is that heterosexual experience is considered the normalcy of experience..."
- Newsweek magazine: *The First Paul*, pp 1-2 – Paul is appalling!
- The genuine Paul—the FIRST Paul, the Paul of the genuine letters—is an ally of progressive Christianity, and we ought to claim our allies where we can find them!
- Three Pauls: 1) 7 genuine letters—THE FIRST PAUL, THE RADICAL PAUL; 2) 3 disputed letters—THE SECOND PAUL, THE CONSERVATIVE PAUL 3) 3 pastorals—massive scholarly agreement that these are not Paul—THE THIRD PAUL—THE REACTIONARY PAUL

- Paul: passionately religious; intelligent; well-educated; an urban apostle; executed by Rome no later than 64 CE
- Paul's communities were small: total # of christians in HRE by 64 CE = 2,000; gathered in shops, 15-20 at a time, perhaps in Corinth met at villas and could accommodate up to 100 people
- Paul = JEWISH – grew up, saw himself as Jewish ALL his life
- Paul = CHRIST-MYSTIC – content of his mysticism was the risen Christ; his conversion was within Judaism: converted from pharisaic Jew to Christ Jew
- Paul = ECSTATIC – “out of one’s ordinary state of being...experiences of union or communion with the sacred” (a la William James); involves the momentary falling away of the dome of the ego, of the ordinary consciousness in which we live, giving us a more real view of our connection to the world outside ourselves; these are states of illumination—the experience itself is filled with light and/or while in this reality, we see the world differently from then on! These experiences are ineffable—unable to put into words! Transitory—as short as a few seconds, minutes, couple of hours. Passive—they come upon you! Noetic—a strong sense of knowing more clearly than ever before—what is known is not more information, but the way things are!!!
- Paul’s “Damascus experience” – an ecstatic mystical experience; he received a “Spirit transplant” like a heart transplant – a transformation of the deepest type
- “in Christ” – used over 100 times in genuine letters (30 pages); “in Spirit” – used over a dozen times in genuine letters
- transformation of the spirit!

CROSSAN Lecture One: “Empire and the Matrix of Paul”

Paul would have been perfectly understandable to ordinary Greek and Roman, people may not have liked what he said, but would have understood him! We have made Paul unnecessarily unintelligible...

The Matrix that is Paul: A Diaspora Jew within egalitarian Christianity within eschatological Judaism within Roman imperialism – must look at his context –city dweller – living in context of Roman imperial victories and conquests (portrayed as women), Roman imperial divinities and theology (Augustus, Roma, Claudius, Venus, showing a collusion between imperial domination and male rape; conquered people symbolized by a woman; conquerors are nude men, representing the satisfaction of rape), and Greek cosmic and classical (mythological) figures – all identified in grand architectural concourses, building, etc.

Peace that comes from victory...showing the brutality of the conquest...

What is the opposition between comparable titles for Caesar the Augustus and Jesus the Christ: God, Son of God, Divine, Lord, Savior of the World; Imperator vs Messiah

Caesar	vs	Christ: two visions of world peace:
religion		religion
war		non-violence
victory		justice
peace		peace
peace through victory		peace through justice (justice is the road to peace...)

If there was in the Roman world—before Jesus ever spoke or Paul ever wrote—who was Lord, Son of God, True God of True God, then why do we need another??? Is this some kind of a joke? And if it's not a joke, then it's some kind of treason...

Paul is explaining that there IS an alternative to Roman imperial theology and peace through victory—and that alternative is a Jew from Nazareth

“Matrix” everything you need to know to understand someone or something – i.e. Martin Luther King and need to know about

Without matrix, Jesus and Paul become great inkblots and you can make of them anything you want...

Time and place are the crosshairs of matrix. With Paul, it is not Christianity against Judaism, but Jewish Christianity against imperial Rome...cf. Daniel 7—where imperial rule of Alexander is described as “beastly.”

Why was the Roman Empire so mighty?

- lasted 2,000 years – longest-running
- the first territorial empire – putting the military on the periphery (like a city wall!) and they participated in daily life far more than before; paid in coin, which introduced Roman magisterium to the empire through the coinage
- the most integrated imperial power – military, economic, political, ideological/theological –Paul couldn't have done what he did to speak against Rome had it not been for the roman roads, etc.
- Rome learned that: You can have a republic, and you can have an empire, but you can't have both at the same time for very long...during civil war BCE...then came September 2, 31 BCE and Octavian and Agrippa totally destroyed Hannibal and the invading forces...now there was peace...and the empire was grateful...
- Augustus was the greatest politician of the known world—turned republic into an empire—and in the process he became “divine” (someone who does something extraordinary for the human race)
- Paul presents Jesus as THE alternative to this empire
- Paul's language—Lord, Son of God—was the language of his era, it was everywhere to indoctrinate the people in Roman imperial theology, peace through victory, etc.

End of Day One: 2 Corinthians, chapter 12: Paul's description of Damascus Road experience

Beginning of Day Two: 1 Corinthians 2: 1-16

CROSSAN: On the Entrance of Escalatory Violence through the Neolithic Revolution

Roman Empire is referred to as a beast, but that is unfair to the beasts, for beasts do not treat each other so poorly... But the problem was not the Roman empire, but domination systems from the beginning of time...back to Neolithic times!

About 4,000 years ago, the Neolithic revolution occurred—cf. Genesis 4—they knew about it from the Sumerians and had the tools to write about it...

Coming out of the Garden, we have going for us “conscience”—the knowledge of good and evil—the knowledge to keep from killing one another. In chapter 4, escalatory violence IS THE original sin—Cain (from the city) killing Abel (from the farm), and city killing the farm. So original sin is violence, not sex (from Genesis 1)...

***Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress*—escalatory violence explained

Mark 15: 6-9

- Barabbas: violent revolutionary set free by the people
- Bar Abbas: the true revolutionary nonviolent – Son of the Abba
- Both condemned by Rome

John 18: 36 – “My kingdom is not of this world...” I’ve never read anything so clearly stated...the kingdom of Jesus is not of this world, or else my followers would be coming here to get me out...my kingdom is not yours of violence...my kingdom is one of peace and justice... (so says Crossan)

“I think of peace through victory and peace through justice as great tectonic plates grinding against each other...”

CROSSAN Lecture Two: Luke and the Mission of Paul

Video Introduction:

- Turkey, 2nd century CE: etched into stone “pews” – “Place of the Jews who are also God-worshippers” – i.e. reserved for this group
- “God-worshippers” are donors for portions of marble flooring in the synagogue, are listed as donors to large-scale building program, and are prominent leaders (financially) in the Jewish culture.
- Lydia: In Acts, she is referred to as “a God-Worshipper from Thyatira”

Lukan Paul:

- The Lukan Paul could be referred to as “the liberal Paul” – one who clearly caused a lot of trouble!
- Luke is writing a couple of generations after Paul lived
- No evidence that he read the letters of Paul
- He knew where Paul traveled
- Author had information about Paul, but interprets it quite differently than does Paul himself
- Christians repeatedly declared innocent...yet it does prod the question “Why are you in court so much...?!”
- We used to think God was all-powerful and all-knowing...then there was Google... (!)
- Similarity between Luke/Acts in describing the radical activity and political entanglements (repeatedly found innocent) of Jesus/Paul
- Paul is extremely important for Luke, yet Luke denies him the one title Paul most desires... “apostle”
- Luke has the correct information about Paul, yet it is the interpretation that is incorrect; for Luke, it’s ALL about the Jews...so he regularly includes the Jews where they could never have been involved (i.e. Acts 9:23-25 cf 2 Corinthians 11:32-33)

Agreements between Paul and Luke:

- Paul is a fervent Jew and a loyal Pharisee (someone who has dedicated his life completely to God and is centered in the ritual law, ritual obligation)
- Paul was disciplined in his spirituality
- Paul was a zealous person, a zealous persecutor of the church
- Paul was persecuted because of Gentile conversion (without requirement of circumcision or ritual devotion)
- His “thorn in the flesh” may very well have been chronic malaria; he was from Tarsus (crowded, dirty city)—swamps—mosquitoes—malaria...just an educated guess by B/C

Disagreements between Paul and Luke:

- Paul was or was not a chosen apostle – he insists on it based on Damascus experience; Luke claims no because he wasn’t there at the beginning
- Luke NEVER grants Paul the title of apostle—no problem referring to Paul as “sent” “called” – but, according to Luke, Paul is sent BY Antioch, or BY the apostles; i.e. for Luke, Paul is the messenger boy...
- We have to take seriously Paul’s own words, “I have SEEN the Lord...”
- Paul was or was not a Roman citizen

The “God-Fearers” or “God-Worshippers”

- Paul’s going after them as converts to Christ, this certainly explains the opposition to him—i.e. re circumcision
- Paul goes after the capitol cities—like his own Tarsus—as his target audience—goes to the synagogues—focuses on the God-worshippers—create a small cell that will go out to the villages and farms and thus spread the gospel—and, so after 20 years,

Paul can say with complete confidence, “I’ve finished the work, and now going to Spain!”

BORG Lecture Two: Paul’s Understanding of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus

Why doesn’t Paul talk about the person and life of Jesus?

- The answer is “breathtakingly simple”—he is writing letters, not gospels, to the groups he has already visited

The issues addressed in this talk are puzzles for many people...

The centrality of “Christ crucified”

- his bumper sticker version of the gospel, cf. Corinthians
- his death was an imperial form of punishment reserved for 1) chronically defiant slaves and 2) violent and nonviolent revolutionaries
- the cross was always a Roman cross
- for Paul, Christ’s death is NOT about substitutionary atonement for sin – i.e. Jesus paid the price for our sin, in our place – this notion is only 1,000 years old
- substitutionary sacrifice is NOT in Paul, nor the NT, nor the OT—it is post-biblical by about 1,000 years
- sacrifice in Judaism was not about substitution...
- sacrifice means “making something sacred by offering it up to God”
- purposes of sacrifice: 1) gift and often including a meal; gift given to God and a meal with God; 2) thanksgiving out of gratitude to God; 3) petition—asking God for something (time of drought or potential invasion, pray for rain or victory); 4) purification (expiation: is about purifying the person offering the sacrifice) [propitiation: trying to turn aside the wrath of God; there are no sacrifices of propitiation in OT]; 5) reconciliation with God (not out of anger) but if there’s been a breach in relationship, a gift and a meal helps to repair the breach
- purity and sin are NOT the same in Judaism: purity/expiation—i.e. Mary and Joseph to temple with Jesus after childbirth
- sacrifice was NEVER about substitution, eg there is nothing in Judaism that precludes Jesus as a sacrificial substitution
- To assume that Paul is saying “I preach Christ crucified” as meaning “I preach Christ died for your sins so you can live a life of grace” ...is a profound betrayal of Paul’s intent and purpose; it also proclaims (wrongly) that the meaning of Jesus’ life is centered in his last 12 hours;
- One evangelical christian on “the Passion of the Christ”: “...this leads to vampire christians who are more interested in his blood than in his life...”
- What substitutionary sacrifice says about God: executes, plans death, requires death of son—pretty scary

How Paul sees “Christ Crucified”

- the “powers” crucified Jesus...i.e. the temple authorities and the imperial authorities...and God vindicated Jesus in the resurrection
- Jesus’ death was an imperial death

- “Jesus is Lord”—the most common post-resurrection proclamation about Jesus; read “Jesus is Lord...and Caesar is not...” which raises, each time, the question of where does one’s allegiance lie—with the imperial vision of how the world should be or with the Jesus vision of peace through justice
- Paul contrasts in wordplay: the wisdom/folly of the world/God—i.e. the wisdom of this world is basically the wisdom of the empire, of the Gentile power; and of this age, the rulers of this age who define their wisdom by power through violence; the normalcy of this world (the way things usually are...); the imperial world that Paul knew
- “normalcy”: politically and economically oppressive social world controlled by violence and legitimated by religion – this was the world Paul knew, and it is the world God vindicated through the risen Christ
- I appeal to you, by the “wombiness of God” to offer yourself as sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1-2) = participatory atonement (very different than substitutionary atonement) says we participate with Jesus in the dying and rising as part of the path to transformation—i.e. dying and rising to behaviors, plans, etc.
- Christ crucified becomes for Paul, a disclosure, revelation, of God’s love for us...
- “For us” does not mean “in our place...” (i.e. King, Bonoeffler, Romero sacrificed their lives because of their love for their people/country/vision; all three were killed during the season of Lent...hmmmm...)
- Paul’s proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus was based wholly in his own Damascus experience of the Risen Christ
- 1 Corinthians 15, Paul declares that Jesus was raised with a spiritual body, expressly denying a physical (bodily) resurrection
- 1 Corinthians 15, Paul also refers to resurrection as “first fruits of resurrection of the dead” meaning (in Jewish imagery) that the general resurrection has begun! In other words, “God’s great cleanup of the world” (the rectification of injustice, violence, etc.) has begun through the work and ministry of Jesus...i.e. “eschatology”—Jesus as inaugurating the participatory eschatology of the world for its transformation now!
- For Paul, the transformation doesn’t wait till an afterlife, it is for the now life!

Q&A:

- “ransom” – (from Mark’s gospel) the context of the word is one of liberation of slaves; therefore the crucifixion is to be understood as our liberation from the violence and power of this world
- God’s great cleanup of the world...do you really see that happening? YES: eradication of slavery, freedom of women, openness to GLBT; NO: escalatory violence in most-violent-ever 20th century
- We are called to participate in the transformation of the world...it’s not going to happen without us...St. Augustine: God without us will not...and we without God cannot (adaptation by Bishop Desmond Tutu)

Afternoon Session: Participatory and Q&A

- Something from this morning that I want to take with me: that substitutionary sacrifice was not part of Judaism...been taught otherwise in undergraduate program, and discarded (both metaphorically and literally) anything connected to it, including much of Paul's work...
- Something from this morning I'd like to see talked about more: participatory eschatology and its grounding in meditation/prayer

Borg: I am inclined to believe that Jesus was in serious verbal debate with the Pharisees, over issues of purity, Sabbath restrictions, eating with outcasts, etc. And Paul, as a zealous Pharisee, may have been caught up in that anti-Pharisaic Jesus movement that was active 3-5 years out from the crucifixion/resurrection...

Borg: why not start the study of Jesus with letters, rather than gospels, because they are earlier? When I did that with undergraduates, it was a disaster! These kids knew NOTHING about Jesus! So the letters made absolutely NO sense to them!

Borg: atonement is a perfectly good word, though most people probably hear "substitution" in the word...reclaiming that word IS a formidable task...

Borg: Greek word for house is "oikos"—from which we get eco = economics (it is about the distribution of God's household)...

Crossan: ...which has a lot of food for everyone and no debt!

Crossan: Our problem is that we have made the personal to mean private...and it has separated us from the world...

Crossan: If you're as good as you think you are, then just be yourselves, and the people of the world will see that you are ok. Don't make the mistake of thinking that empire went away with the last election...

Borg: Empire is not just about leadership...it is a mentality of large chunk of population...I think the majority of Americans think it is very important that we are overwhelmingly the most powerful nation in the world militarily...

[we need to give real thought to that...and to its implications for health care, education, arts, infrastructure...]

Borg: I've often thought how refreshing it would be to live in a country that didn't need to be #1! How relaxing to not worry when the next Olympics come around about how many medals we're going to get! Being #1 is the imperial mentality...

Crossan: Some people think that the god of the old testament is violent and the god of the new testament is peaceful, and that works ok if you don't read the bible!!! In the Bible you have two visions of God: a violent God of retributive justice and a nonviolent God of restorative justice—the infection of peace through victory is in the Bible. Which of those gods is incarnate in Jesus? Clearly it is the second!

Borg: Orthodox Christianity has always insisted that Jesus is the decisive vision of God. Jesus taught non-violent resistance to domination systems. Also I think it is good, in teaching and dialogue situations, to find out that the Bible is simply sometimes wrong...especially in the current discussion of same-gender relationships. Use the fact that some first-century christians thought Jesus would return within their lifetimes...they were wrong! 1 Samuel speaks of God annihilating a whole civilian population...ask people if this can be God's will...

Crossan: God so loved the world that he sent us a book...!

Crossan: Median age in 1st century was 29-30, but that number is skewed. In the first century, 1/3 won't survive birth, and another 1/3 won't survive puberty. If you survive those two transitions, you have a good chance of seeing 60.

Crossan: Paul thinks that every christian ought to have mystical experiences—i.e. at baptism, etc. That is not the same as an ecstatic experience. Mystical experience is simply union with your God (like a heart transplant, with a new spirit taking over...). Ecstatic experience is not theology, it is chemistry—it can be brought on by medication and it can be brought on by meditation! The content of the ecstatic experience is what most matters...

Borg: Regarding ecstatic mystical experiences, the reflection on it afterwards is as important as the experience itself. Does it transform you? The christian life is about transformation, and most often that transformation is incremental, gradual, etc. If the christian life isn't about transformation, then what the hell is it about???

Crossan: Mysticism is not an option for we christians...it is our vocation! Like falling in love (quick, immediate infatuation or seeing a long-time co-worker as someone to love)... mystical experiences can be immediate and they can also be long slow processes.

Crossan: If we are a species addicted to escalatory violence, then we are doomed...the good news is that there is hope for change!

Borg: The original meaning of "gospel" is "good news"—and for Paul, that good news was Christ Crucified—after the writing and distribution of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, a secondary meaning came to be "a story of the life of Jesus." Nothing wrong with that understanding, just not the original meaning.

Crossan: In the first four books of the New Testament, the authors are very clear to say, "this is the gospel according to _____." There is only ONE gospel, and different versions...

Beginning of Day Three: Romans 6: 5-11, 8: 31-35, 37-39

CROSSAN Lecture Three: Equality and the Vision of Paul

Eschatology:

- Why do we need that word? Sounds like a rash...!
- We need it because: injustice prevails no matter what empire or invader is in charge, yet God is just, so how one prevails in the disparity of the two...is eschatology.
- Eschaton: we have mystified it beyond all human comprehension...we want the NT to sound stupid so we don't have to believe it anymore...
- Meaning: "the end of the line..." NOT about the end of the world... so the eschaton in NT is the end of the negative: oppression, violence, injustice. Eschaton is about making the household of God's house a decent house in which to live. It's really not about hope, it's about faith. This is God's great cleanup of the world!
- Apocalyptic Eschatology: this is the great divine cleanup of the world! In the first century, with the Romans in firm control, you want to know how soon...when will the Romans be out? In our lifetime? If so, then I'm interested in how you know this.
- Is the eschaton "here" or "near"??? If here, look around...nothing has changed...God has been waiting for you and you have been waiting for God...no wonder nothing has changed...we must collaborate with God for the change to occur!
- Augustine: Without you God made you, without you God can save you...
- Radical equality! For good and bad, rich and poor, female and male, all will experience the same justice...according to Philo (a contemporary of Jesus, Jewish philosopher)
- Don't let anyone tell you, that we are just projecting our version of democracy back to the first century...NO! Egalitarian community was seen in Philo, Jesus, Paul...

Paul writes Letters!

- And they are not written to us!
- If we don't understand them, THAT is our problem, not Paul's!
- When we read that letter, in order to understand it, we must turn the letter into story

From Jewish eschatology to Christian eschatology

- Galatians 3:26-28 and 1 Corinthians 12:11-13: when reading, be sure to include Christ! Paul is not saying there is no difference between these...he is saying, when you come into the christian community, there is no superiority of one over the other.
- This is the first example of the Radical Paul...

Philemon (rhymes with Hanuman): The Radical Paul on Slavery

- We know that it is written by Paul while he is in prison in Ephesus (best guess) in the jail of the governor for something serious
- Philemon: slave owner...Onesimus: slave who has fled (oh—neh—seh—mus)
- O flees to Paul for protection because Paul is in a powerful position over P...

- Episodic question: can a christian master keep a christian slave?
- Basically, this should be the shortest letter: “Dear Philemon, Free Onesimus. From Paul” But it takes Paul 25 verses because this is a teaching opportunity for the whole household, who is watching what P will do about O
- P must do the freeing freely! Otherwise it is required, and P doesn’t get the chance to practice (and strengthen) his own christian faith
- So what we have here is a masterpiece of what the Romans call rhetoric, and we might call manipulation!
- Revelation of Paul’s character and heart of Pauline theology: “that your good deed might be voluntary, and not something forced...” Paul is “commanding” P to do something he ought to know to do on his own
- The point Paul is making: a christian master cannot hold a christian slave, because how can you be equal and unequal at the same time??

The Conservative Paul and the Reactionary Paul on Slavery

- Conservative: Colossians 3:22-4:1 and Ephesians 6:5-9
- Slavery is taken for granted, the only discussion is how they should be treated
- Reactionary: Titus
- Hierarchy is assumed; slaves not even addressed directly; let’s get back to Roman normalcy and command the owners
- When we (B/C) place these letters in Post-Pauline literature, that is common scholarship; what is not common is to insist that they are ANTI-Paul, as we are doing...

The Radical Paul on Patriarchy

- 1 Corinthians 7 is about equality in the home; all relationships spoken of by Paul are described reciprocally, to insist on equality
- Romans 16 – is the Radical Paul on women in ministry...where he names everyone in leadership equally; the person who carries the letter of Romans to Rome is a woman!
- In the past 300 years we have made the letter to Romans incomprehensible!
- Phoebe takes the letter to several shop churches, has to read it (which is hard to do if you cannot talk in church...!), speak it, and she had better be prepared to explain it
- Either Phoebe is the most sophisticated theologian ever, or Romans is just not that difficult to understand...!
- Phoebe is Paul’s patron—this designation puts Paul in second place.
- Greet the jewish christian couple and gentile christian couple: who worked with me
- After these greetings, 27 people are mentioned, of which 10 are women, 17 men
- Singled out for special praise are 5 women and 6 men
- “kopiao” meaning “worked hard” – in the sense of giving one’s whole life to the work of Christ; used by Paul 2x of himself, 4 other times all of women
- Junia changed to Junianos, to make HER into a male because we cannot have a female apostle...but according to the Radical Paul, we can have a female apostle

The Conservative Paul on Patriarchy

- In Colossians and Ephesians, we see hierarchy with reciprocity, and since husbands get 2x the number of verses, then husbands must be the problem!
- Places the husband in the place of householder, who will be called upon to stand in for the whole family in the event that Romans come for them...means he would be the one to die in their place

The Reactionary Paul on Patriarchy

- We know that women were speaking and teaching in church, or there wouldn't need to be this particular reaction
- 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36: this is in Radical Paul, redacted—1) different type of language, 2) this passage is in the margins in the earliest manuscripts, as a comment from one scribe, and is inserted in the text by the next scribe, 3) furthermore if you take this out and read straight through it reads more smoothly, and 4) it contradicts the Radical Paul
- Redaction in Paul would be like finding in MLKing's writing: "and if all this doesn't work, use the bombs..." So we would know that King didn't write it, or we wouldn't know how to interpret it in light of the rest of his work...

BORG Lecture Three: Paul's Vision of Life "in Christ"

New life in Christ is life when Jesus is Lord and the Lords of imperial normalcy are not!

Paul was an URBAN person

- Tourists now see the monumental remains that only about 10% of the population would have enjoyed: and they see air conditioning, indoor plumbing, luxuries
- Antioch: very high population density because cities were walled—so very difficult for city to expand—tendency for city to remain confined within the walls—2 miles long by 1 mile wide with a population of 150,000...see book!
- Antioch had population density of 200 people per square acre—about 3 city lots
- Chicago: 21/acre; San Francisco: 23/acre; NYC: 37/acre; Manhattan: 100/acre
- Typical Antioch house was 1 room used for sleeping; most of living was done outdoors; sanitation conditions dismal; diseases rampant; life expectancy low; on average, some major disaster (natural or political) happened every 30-35 years; massive migration from countryside to city; agricultural land was changing hands from family to "multi-nationals" who then hired the former owners as tenant farmers; crops changed from what was needed to live to what would bring financial profit...like today...
- Migration to cities also destroyed the personal support received by those in need in small villages
- 90% of the cities Paul worked in would be the working poor: artisans, day laborers, and all in-between—the urban working class made up the majority of Paul's congregations

Paul's Communities of Faith

- Small—with the exception of Corinth, which most likely met in a larger villa—to fit comfortably in a shop of 12x12 or 12x10—probably 15-20 people max in each

- Remarkably egalitarian
- Use “new family” imagery: “fictive families” (anthropological term for family that is chosen); this “family” has the same social responsibility usually assumed by biological family—support with food, money, relationships—all in these communities would be as brothers and sisters to each other
- NRSV “believers” is nearly always a translation of “brothers and sisters”, which totally individualizes the christian faith—i.e. “I am a believer”—and negates the communitarian aspects of these early christian communities
- the communities of Paul were NOT like the Jerusalem community, in which all believers sold what they had and held everything in common, but WERE communities that were “share communities”—i.e. if you were out of work, you would be fed; sharing of bread, metaphorically and literally
- Evidence of these communities being “share communities” can be found in 2 Thessalonians (2nd Paul): “whoever doesn’t work shall not eat...” The issue was about freeloaders, not even trying to find work, that is taking advantage of the generosity of the “share communities”; cf 1 Timothy (3rd Paul) on “true widows,” who will be taken care of by the community
- Combination of wealthy and poorer, or laborers in the communities—i.e. in Ephesus there is a villa right downtown, built with the ground floor open for shops and the upstairs living areas for the aristocratic family
- 1 Corinthians 11: evidence that the wealthy were using communion as a carousing party time, rather than waiting for the laborers in the community to arrive after their work day to participate equally...
- “rightly discerning the body” at some time in christian timeline came to mean rightly discerning the substance of the bread/wine—i.e. con/trans/etc.—what do YOU believe and is it proper belief?—Paul says “rightly discerning the body” has to do with taking care of the whole community—
- Romans 12:14-21 on NonViolence: The most sustained passage in Paul containing the echoes of Jesus—this is about participation in military violence, not self-protection

Communities of Paul are about:

- FREEDOM
from the imperial powers that be; freedom for living in Christ more fully
- JOY
Erotic Exuberance! The joy Paul exudes even while in prison
Eros is the desire for union; the desire for union with God; Paul urges his communities to be so desirous and exuberant!
- PEACE
through justice, not through military victory
- LOVE
an abundance of gifts and a hierarchy of gifts—with love as THE most important gift because there is to be NO hierarchy of persons

Is Paul's ethic for community also an ethic for the world? YES! For Paul's ethic is based in God's passion for the world, and is for the transformation of the world.

Questions to use with adult study class: If you are asked to state the heart of the christian message, what would you say? How about at age 12, what would you have said?

What is the gospel according to Paul?

- Christ Crucified
- Jesus is Lord
- Life 'in Christ'
- Justification by grace through faith
- God's Great Cleanup of the World is begun in Jesus and we're invited to be part of it
- The gospel is about transformation

Q&A:

- Pacifism: the complete abstention from participation in war; "just war"—since the 3rd/4th century, this designation keeps christians from depending on others in the population for defense of community
- Don't get caught up in the argument that self-defense or protection of one's family is somehow indicative of non-pacifism
- Pacifists are right about 95% of the time!

Afternoon Session: Participatory and Q&A

- Something I want to remember from this morning; something I don't want to fall into the sea of forgetfulness: the notions of "share communities" and "families" as contemporary ways for us to live out our christian faith
- Something I'd like to see talked about: County Sligo and anything Ireland!

Borg: Next pilgrimage—first couple of weeks in May 2009—to Turkey

Crossan: bread and wine: based on Mediterranean diet! "Bread" represents the fair distribution of food, and that is dangerous business; multiplication of loaves and fishes; "Wine" represents the death, pouring out of life, and the life of Jesus.

A combination of the life/death of Jesus and the value of Jesus/Paul for the fair distribution of food for all.

Borg: the language of "body and blood" inevitably leads one to a specifically violent death, i.e. crucifixion, state-sponsored execution. So communion is a reenactment of this reality of Jesus being executed by imperial authorities.

Borg: Niebuhr speaks of the political relevance of an impossible ideal (i.e. a world of peace and justice) because it will lead to greater and closer approximations of the ideal. (cf *Moral Man and Immoral Society*)

Borg: the Hebrew prophets primarily spoke to the leaders—religious, political, social—in order to effect cultural/systemic change on behalf of the masses; Jesus was the first to enlist the participation of the “masses”—the poor, marginalized, the peasants—on their own behalf. Thus the notion of “participatory eschatology” is embodied in the life and work of Jesus.

Crossan: Religions, and particularly those reflecting justice, provide us with the leverage to make transformation possible.

Borg: For Christians, God’s great cleanup of the world has begun in Jesus...does that mean that God doesn’t have other cleanup efforts in operation? Heavens no!

Crossan: The mystery of particularity: on your 25th wedding anniversary dinner, look at your spouse, and say you might have married someone else, and lived with them and be having dinner with them on this fine evening...you don’t say that unless you are an imbecile! Particularity applies to the person you love and the religion you love! Someone else’s particularity doesn’t negate yours! Particularity is the mystery of our humanity.

Crossan/Borg: “The Twelve”—if this was Jesus’ attempt to reconstitute in a new way the 12 tribes within his own era, the twelve had to be 12 in number and they had to be male. To use those as rationale for keeping women out of ministry is “utterly bankrupt argument!” The Twelve are different than the later 12 Apostles...different purpose.

Crossan: Luke is toning down Paul, and toning down Christianity in general...yet Luke is one of the most radical gospel portraits of Jesus...

Crossan: Second and Third Pauls are the domestication of Jesus and of Paul.

Crossan: Re universal salvation—is just an “ass backwards” way of thinking! Salvation means many things in scripture: liberation, returning from exile, becoming whole, there are many ways to experience salvation...scripture is clear that salvation is about this life, so the answer to “universal salvation” is obviously “NO!” Not everyone is transformed in this life. If the question is about who gets to go to heaven, then it is based on a mistaken definition of salvation as being about the sweet by and by...rather than about activities, decisions, visions realized in this life!

Borg: I don’t want universal salvation to be about the next life only; I want it to be an idea we must entertain here, or we don’t have a future as a species...so I must hope that Paul is correct and salvation is about this life.

Crossan: Does God love everybody? Yeah!!! But if you don’t see that for yourself, nothing changes. So it is possible to fail to see that God loves the whole world and to remain in anger, fear, grasping...if you want to transpose universal salvation into the universal love of God...it works...it works!

Beginning of Day Four: Philippians 2:1-11

CROSSAN Lecture Four: Justice and the God of Paul

Video on the General Resurrection Having Begun:

- cf Matthew 27:52 and 1 Corinthians 15:20
- Who are those who have slept?
- How does their resurrection proclaim the justice of God?
- According to NT, Jesus arises triumphant, but alone...
- Jesus' communal resurrection in Eastern Christianity—repeatedly portrayed in art, along with Adam, Eve, others unnamed, Abel, John the Baptist,
- Church of the Holy Sepulcher Jerusalem: Easter Processional Banner titled “Resurrection” shows Jesus reaching to Adam, Eve, Abel, John the Baptist
- You have been raised with Christ

[Apple OR PC...went to Bible where we go to make all our decisions...“apple of God’s eye” according to Deuteronomy, Psalms, Proverbs, Zechariah...Later, our decision was confirmed when I saw in Ecclesiastes 12:3 “those who look through the windows see dimly...”]

Righteousness, Justification by Grace, through Faith, in the Sacrifice of Christ:

- when you see righteousness used by Paul, cross it out and insert “justice”
- Righteous/Justify = same root in Greek
- How is the righteousness of God brings justification by grace, through faith, in the sacrifice of Christ? Look at each of these four words/phrases
- No interest initially in writing a book on Paul—felt that Paul was forever trapped in the Reformation, and ought to be left there, then traveled to Paul’s territory and began to see him within his historical context of first century roman imperial reality

Righteousness:

- Is God a god of distributive justice and restorative righteousness OR retributive justice and punitive righteousness? In other words, is God loving or spiteful?
- We hear justice, almost exclusively, as punishment
- Punishment = comes from the outside
- Consequence = comes from the inside
- Is there ANY evidence that God has ever punished anyone, anywhere, at any time???
- The consequences of wrong action are terribly serious and repeated, but do not blame God for that as if it were God’s punishment...
- Difference: drive drunk—hit a tree—get fined—that’s a punishment; drive drunk—hit a tree—get killed—that’s a consequence
- OT: contradiction between Deuteronomy 28 (which says good are rewarded and bad are punished by God) AND Job and his four deuteronomic fundamentalist friends
- Frost: ...to stultify the Deuteronomist...and releasing me from moral bondage to the human race... (God thanks Job!)

- Take consequences VERY seriously, but do not make the mistake of placing them at God's feet
- God is a God of dj and rr who has created the world in a way that will work...I like to make the argument as organic as possible, to think of the world as the actual Body of God...justice is the bleeding heart of the universe...
- Instead of thinking of punishments, think of consequences, and take them more seriously...
- Change punishment into consequences...Change forgiveness into the fact that we CAN change...The mercy of God is that we have time to be transformed
- punishment and forgiveness stand or fall together, and I think they ought to fall...
- Good for God...but what about me???

Human Justification:

- Justification is about transformation, NOT imputation
- Is about transformation! cf 2 Corinthians 3: 18; 4:16; 5:17
- Two metaphors:
- Heart Transplant – process over time, body accepts/rejects new heart – life goes on or not; Think of justification as a “Spirit Transplant” – where spirit of Jesus is transplanted into us, a bit at a time...
- The very character of God is offered to us!
- Electronic Metaphor – free Operational System download – will the new OS change my stuff like it did before (all italics were changed...!) – note back from Apple: No, it won't change a thing, but you'll see it all differently...! Yes or No?
- God's character transplant in us is like a free download!

Grace:

- Free offer: you have to say yes or no. Free gift: only becomes a gift when I take it!
- Think of air: always there, absolutely immanent, free, nothing to do with our merits, available to everyone whether we like it or not; but WE DO HAVE TO BREATHE!

Faith:

- Is not about proposition, but is a program
- It is a commitment of my time, talents, body, soul, mind, being

Sacrifice:

- Is about participatory sacrificial atonement NOT substitutionary sacrificial atonement
- When someone wants to debate substitutionary atonement: do not argue; say “I've been reading Paul and I think he's talking about participatory atonement...” and see what happens! Don't argue, just change the language to the positive
- Anselm: how did he come up with substitutionary language? I have respect for him as a monk and a saint, not as a philosopher or theologian!
- Anselm's matrix was the 11th century: arguing between king and pope about who appoints bishops; eventually, Anselm is made archbishop by the king; not just an archbishop in his cathedral, also the first baron of the realm and the second most important military leader in his realm

- In Anselm’s time, the feudal authorities were not allowed to forgive...could only exact fair punishment...so Anselm was caught by that...this is the metaphor that takes control of Anselm’s mind: as the lord of the realm cannot forgive, so also God cannot forgive...
- Anselm was against the first crusade, saying that it would be better to argue with them than to kill them...
- Anselm’s model for God was Norman Ruler or Feudal Lord, NOT a spiritual director or Monastic Abbot
- Paul speaks of sacrificial atonement, and B/C interpret that phrase as “participatory”—including all of us all the time using the best of who we are
- In Paul, we often get inserted information...
- From Paul and Anselm: How are we saved from our sins by participation in the sacrificial atonement of Christ? Our original sin is escalatory violence (cf Genesis 4). Jesus lived a life of non-violent resistance to evil as the revelation of the character of God—offered freely to us in and by that incarnation. Jesus died—without violence on his part—for the integrity of that incarnate revelation. Jesus thereby “made sacred” his life and his death. We are called to participate by faith in the free offer of non-violent life with God in Christ. Acceptance atones for our violent evolutionary past and makes possible a non-violent evolutionary future (the only possible future we have as a species...).

Appendix

- Romans 13:1-7 “be subject to governing authorities”
- Wish he hadn’t said it...arguably, some of his stupidest teaching...right out of synagogue rules
- Start reading at 12:14-21—where he restates some of Jesus’ most radical stuff from the sermon on the mount
- Uses “resist” three times: the verb means to resist VIOLENTLY; does not mean to resist any other way. A very strong military metaphor. From anti=against and taxis=a drawing up, the order or disposition of an army, array, order of battle, a single rank or line of soldiers, to be drawn up a few lines deep, a body of soldiers, a squadron” and other such military dispositions for battle.
- Matrix for this teaching: Nero is growing in power and might; Paul is arguing against playing this violent game; he is not so concerned about Romans killing Christians as he is concerned about Christians killing Romans...Do not resist Rome violently...

Conclusion

- Wherever we see generosity and fairness, we see God; Wherever we do not see fairness and generosity, we fail to see God
- You must name the Holy and know that your naming is inadequate!
- God’s spirit is JUSTICE and the absence of justice is the absence of God...

BORG Lecture Four: Controversial Texts and Adult Theological Re-Education About Paul

Do a lot of visiting of congregations; recently in a fairly large congregation with four services each Sunday morning: 1) for newcomers; 2) traditional for long-term christians; 3) to air doubts and/or fears about one's faith; 4) for those grieving a loss and need to openly process that grief... They call their program "Finders Keepers Losers Weepers...!"

Same-Gender Relationships:

- Read: Robin Scroggs *Homosexuality in the NT* and William Countryman *Dirt, Greed and Sex*
- Relevant OT material: only 1 verse in the whole of the OT that speaks of homosexual relationships: Leviticus 18:22—"abomination"—consequence is being thrown off the land; the use of the Bible on this issue is absolutized—people ignore other surrounding texts delineating behavior also called abominations...
- Texts from Timothy and 1 Corinthians—"list texts"—text that lists behavior – general scholarship agrees that these are pederasty (sex between adult males and young boys)
- Rules about sexual behavior in OT are about 1) purity and 2) property
- When people talk about family values in the Bible it is usually because they haven't read the Bible!

Romans 1:26-27:

- Only 1 text in NT that concern same-gender relationships (this is the only one in the whole Bible as well): Romans 1:26-27
- Part of larger pericope, beginning with verse 18 and extending through verse 32
- First part of pericope is an indictment of the Gentile world, and basically concerns idolatry as the classic vice of the gentile world...this is standard Jewish perception of the Gentile world
- The whole passage is standard Jewish rhetoric about Gentiles...like you would hear in synagogue.
- Jewish matrix: they have been oppressed by one Gentile after another for over 600 years...so these are fairly standard stereotypes of the wickedness of Gentiles
- In Romans, Paul is addressing a christian community that is predominantly Jewish, and he has not met them yet, so he is working to establish his identity and capturing their benevolence; therefore he uses a standard Jewish format.
- The list captures a standard list of Gentile vices.
- Given that same-gender relationships are in a list of Gentile vices, how much did it really matter to Paul? Perhaps he is simply reciting a list...
- Are homosexual people more important to Paul than gossips? (also included in list)
- The understanding of "natural" and "unnatural" are driven by one's cultural...this is not simply the "way things are or ought to be for all time..."
- If Paul actually thought that same-gender relationships were wrong, it may be helpful to note that he was wrong about some things!
- Helpful for us to understand that the bible is sometimes wrong...don't let the notion of inerrancy prevail!

- Paul emphasizes the egalitarian quality of life in Christ can be extended to include “gay or straight.”

Flesh and Spirit:

- “better for a man not to touch a woman” – Almost certainly, this line is Paul quoting a line from a letter he has received from the Corinthians, so he is saying, “I’m starting with this thought, and commenting on it...”
- Yet he says the whole law can be summed up in “Love neighbor as self...”
- And in Galatians, in the lists of gifts of Flesh and Spirit – nothing that marks those as peculiarly bodily sins...best understood as NOT anti-body, but both are lists of two ways of living life in the body: i.e. by exclusive focus on body AND by exclusive focus on spirit.

Rich Passages from Philippians:

- Paul is in prison and is considering that he might soon be executed. Seems to see this as a farewell letter to friends.
- From near the end of his life and ministry—advice from the prison cell
- 4:4-13 is the “language of a saint” – who has learned to live with plenty or little and to depend on Christ for all
- 2:1-11: Paul quotes what is probably an early christian hymn (and if it is, it is the earliest christian hymn known to us...probably more like a Taizé chant than like our traditional hymns today)
- B/C see this hymn as a contrast, not between Gentile and Jewish or Jewish and Christian, but between Christ and Roman imperial theology. Three-story universe assumed (typical in first century). This passage crystallizes Paul’s theology better than any other...(IMHO!)

Taking This Home: Adult Theological RE-Education about Paul:

- might be the “first word” for many!
- Reading Group: does not require an expert teacher...! Only need to know how to facilitate discussion; can range from 6 or 8 up to 50 (use small groups)
- Include time for group formation and group interaction...duh...
- In last session: what will you take with you (continue to puzzle about) from this series
- Discussion Group Based on a Video Series: *Eclipsing Empire* (based on B/C Pilgrimage in 2006)
- Support adult education in the church: buy video series, sponsor a lecture series, financially support someone in our congregation to go on one of the pilgrimages...
- Beyond Paul: use *Living the Questions* along with group study guides by Woodlake Books and designed by Tim Scorer.
- Woodlake *Living the Questions* are in the process of designing a series for 20 and 30-somethings!
- What’s at state is really the transformation of ourselves, the church, God’s world!
- “A congregation of 200 intentional christians can have more influence and impact on the world than a congregation of 2,000 who are not intentional!”

Q&A:

- Try Living the Questions.com – especially series 2.0!
- Christ Crucified basically means “executed by Rome as a rebel” and not part of God’s plan or intent
- Buried with Christ basically is a synonymous parallel for “dying with Christ” or “immersed, swallowed up in the waters”
- Recommended Eugene Peterson’s *The Message Bible*
- New Oxford NRSV, 3rd edition (this edition is vastly improved over the previous!)
- With Christ the King Sunday...let’s also have a Christ the Hen (brooding over and collecting her chicks...)

Afternoon Session: Participatory and Q&A

- Something I’d like to hear talked about: Paul’s use of the term “homosexuality” was, perhaps, a reference to Gentile temple prostitutes...yes?
- Something I want to take with me from this week that I don’t want to fall into the sea of forgetfulness: the notion that and evidence for Paul NOT being a stubborn, haughty jerk! In other words, to continue “unlearning what I have come to understand as Pauline...in image and in word...”
- Just as Jesus came at a “lull” in military expansion, so do we...maybe what we are intentional about carries a lot of weight

Crossan: Violence is certainly not good for us, but violence is bad because it’s bad for God’s world...The most inconvenient truth is that “injustice shakes the foundations of the earth...” (cf Psalm)

Borg: It may be that we have little evidence of rural Christianity from early times, because Christianity was primarily an urban movement...

Crossan: When we use the language at communion of “body and blood” we tend to read into it substitutionary atonement; yet none of the world religions that have blood sacrifices mean substitution...substitutionary sacrifice is the black hole sucking us down into it...don’t let that happen!

Crossan: The church has been long on charity and short on justice...charity rarely offends, justice nearly always offends...

Borg: God “breaking in” is a metaphor that I hesitate to use because intervention is a destructive christian concept...yet if we see God’s breaking in metaphorically, it is certainly true that God is everywhere...

Borg: Why were 2nd and 3rd Paul written? 1) to tone down radical Christianity so as to attract more converts; 2) to deal with some questions that had not surfaced during the time

of Paul, i.e. authority and leadership; 3) Paul was very subversive, and when you subvert the subversive, you get back to the conventional

Crossan: The more your community is being discriminated against, the escalation of the language of violence becomes more extreme...so by the end of the 1st century, the oppositional language of 2nd/3rd Paul is not surprising...just not original radical Paul!

Borg: *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* contains the only physical description of Paul: eyebrows meet, bowed legs, 4'6", sometimes he had the face of a man and sometimes the face of an angel.

Crossan: When we sing songs about Jesus returning, it assumes "he ain't here now..." which is incorrect! Secondly, that he is coming back to do the job right, also incorrect. The model behind each of these (especially in Johannine) is of the peaceful imperial visit...better watch out! My own perspective is that Jesus is here, he never left, and if there is a need for a second coming, it would be because people didn't pay attention to the first!

Borg: The notion of Jesus returning soon is really not central to his message...his language is not about final judgment, or being ready...it's very secondary to Paul's passion.

Crossan: God as justice...are you sharing your stuff with others, i.e. distributive justice. We have dissociated love and justice...love is the spirit/soul of justice and justice is the body/flesh of love...

Borg: According to Bill Coffin speaking to a group of Christians years ago, "I want to send you off with the highest compliment ever paid to anyone by the most unimpeachable authority: you are the light of the world, you are the salt of the earth, you are leaven..." Go and be light, salt, leaven, blessings of God, Creator, Christ, Spirit be with you always. Amen...