**Sermon 30 March 2025**

**Rev Scott Cadman**

**John 16:12-15**

**All that the Father has is mine**

The first time I preached in this church was a Baptist Assembly a few years ago. Some of you may have been there but I’m assuming most of you weren’t. It was a Friday night and knowing how tired most of us are at the end of a week I chose as my text the story of Eutychus from Acts 20. Eutychus may not be familiar to you although his is one of the great New Testament stories. He’s a young keen Christian who hears that the great apostle Paul is coming to town to preach. It’s a hot night and everyone is crammed in like sardines. Finding a spot on the window sill and hoping to catch one of those sea breezes Grange is familiar with Paul starts preaching and preaching and preaching. Unfortunately for Eutychus after a few hours Paul’s voice becomes a distant drone and as he nods off, he falls out the window and dies. You can read the rest of the story for yourselves—Acts 20 because my purpose today is not to preach about Eutychus again but to use him to put John 16 into some context.

Now as you will have noticed the last number of weeks there are some truly wonderful passages in John. However, John’s gospel takes a turn between chapters 14 through 17, not for the worse. It is full of all sorts of profound images, statements, prayers but it is dense. So dense that it can engender in us a bit of the Eutychus experience. Where we listeners run the risk of nodding off. The disciples themselves experience something of this because by John 16:18 they’re texting each other ***We don’t understand what he’s saying.”***

And not understanding is but a short step to wandering or nodding off.

As for me after reading John 16 not only do I have sympathy with the disciples, I’m starting to see why Mark has asked me to preach on this passage. May I say that I’m beginning to suspect that your pastor and my friend is more cunning and devious than I previously realised. Fortunately, he threw me a lifeline. **“You don’t need to cover the whole passage.”** So taking him at his word here is our text from John 16. ***All that the Father has is mine. – John 16:15***

Now although this is an exceedingly short text and seemingly obvious, I think our secularised modern ear can easily misunderstand what Jesus is saying. The danger in our culture is that we tend to hear the word mine in terms of possession and possessiveness. When we talk of mine, we mean that it belongs to us, as though somehow we have acquired things for ourselves by our own strength and ability. That we are the masters of all we have. When we hear the word mine it’s a simple transition to the other word that goes hand in hand with mine – me. You see our possessiveness infects not only the material things we acquire. It affects who we are. We become the most important person in the whole human equation.

On a recent flight over to NZ as we approached Auckland the flight attendant came over the sound system. She said we have a number of people who need to catch connecting domestic flights. Please remain seated and wait while those with a connecting flight can leave. No sooner had the plane landed and fifty people stand up, grab their bags and wait to disembark. That’s a lot of domestic travellers I thought while righteously remaining seated. After a couple of minutes the flight attendant comes back on. There are 8 people who need to catch connecting flights. Those of us seated shook our heads, tut tutted and derisively laughed as only the self righteous can. The sad thing is that not one of the fifty standing sat down or moved aside. Me, me, me. Mine, mine, mine.

The Bible certainly has stories which bear this out. King David is strolling out on the palace roof one day when he sees Bathsheba having a bath. Such is her beauty that David says I must have her for myself. Only to find out she is married to Uriah. But what is a mere faithful foot soldier compared to the King. A king who surveys all his kingdom, Bathsheba included, and says this is mine. David destroys Uriah so that he can have his wife. Not for one moment in the telling of that story do we get a sense that David is thinking of Uriah or even Bathsheba. It’s all me, me, me. Mine, mine, mine. We like to excuse ourselves from the magnitude of David's sins but I wonder over the years what have we done to pursue our claims, promote ourselves above others for our gain and benefit?

And then there is the prodigal son who wishes his father dead so he can have the money to live life as he feels it should be lived. Is there any more self-centred character in all of scripture than this young man. Even his return home is dripping in self pity and how things will work out for him.

Yet in this parable we start to see in the Father that God is quite different to us. And this is certainly what Jesus is getting at when he says ***All that the Father has is mine.*** It is not about possessions or possessiveness but a very different meaning which speaks of relationship, of community. A way of living that transcends our own desires and yet fulfils us in more ways than all the possessions and self-centredness in the world could ever achieve. It is all based in how God, the Father, Son and Spirit, relate to each. The relationship they have among themselves is the antidote to a possessiveness that is self-centred and threatens to consume us and the world we live in. The hallmarks of this relationship are delight, pouring out, generosity, self-sacrificing love and rejoicing.

The Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, which most of us know little about, has a wonderful way of describing this. In this we see the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in this constant circular dance. It’s a dance of life and love that is never-ending as each person adoringly waltzes with every other person in a divine eagerness to make known to the world the riches of one another. The Father pours out everything onto the Son. The Spirit then takes all that from the Son to pour out these riches on all other people. Each person in God exudes enthusiasm for the other two (and the three together display a zestful enthusiasm for us all). The generosity of the Father, the self-sacrificing love of the Son and the sheer rejoicing of the Spirit gives us a wonderful example of how we should live in relationship with God but also each other.

**In Marilynne Robinson's novel, “Gilead”, the narrator, 76-year-old Rev. John Ames, ponders the enormous love he feels for his little 7-year-old son. At one point he writes to his son, “There’s a shimmer on a child’s hair, in the sunlight. There are rainbow colours in it, tiny, soft beams of just the same colours you can see in the dew sometimes. Your hair is straight and dark and your skin is very fair. I suppose you’re not prettier than most children. You’re just a nice-looking boy, a bit slight, well scrubbed and well mannered. All that is fine, but it’s your existence I love you for, mainly. Existence seems to me now the most remarkable thing that could ever be imagined.”**

That's what we find in God. The Father, Son and Spirit rejoice in the sheer existence of each other. And it is utterly contagious, it can't do anything other than to spill out into the rest of creation. You, me, the whole world.

If we think that's all too simplistic and not how the real world works well let me tell you the real world is not working that well. In fact the real world is God's kingdom where God's reign and life shape and fashion everything. And at the heart of that is generosity, self sacrificing love and rejoicing in the sheer existence of each other. Because when it comes to life and love, relationships and community we agree with Marilynne Robinson **it’s your existence I love you for.**

So when Jesus says ***All that the Father has is mine***, it's not possessive. It's that God has given all he is to Jesus and Jesus in turn not only delights the Father but rejoices in him. There's no rivalry. No David covetously wanting his way in everything. No prodigal son wishing ill on the father. It is joy, delight, life, love poured out even upon us. When we realise that God is like this we might well ask ourselves. What would it mean for us to rejoice in the sheer existence of each other and of God our maker? What would it mean to see all our possessions not as ours but for the joy and delight of others?

I can remember an old guy in the church in Christchurch and his daughter telling me that when she was growing up whichever car was last in the drive was the one that was taken first. The father who probably owned all the cars didn't say this is mine. If someone, and that included guests, needed a car they got whatever car was first out of the drive whether that was his car, the best car, or the derelict old bomb that teenagers often have. I have always admired that. What would it mean to see all our possessions not as ours but for the joy and delight of others. What would it mean for us to take a leaf out of Jesus' book to have everything the Father gives not for us to hold onto just for ourselves but for the sheer joy, delight and benefit of everyone God has placed in our lives.