

# How Sweet...

## Big Thoughts in a COVID-19 World

Rev. Kevin D. Kriesel, Blue Mound UMC

Growing up, I was a huge Monty Python fan. I loved British humor, often just a little bit naughty, perfect for a middle school boy in the '70s. "How sweet to be an idiot" goes a Python song... "As harmless as a cloud, too small to hide the sun." We'll get back to that...

On a recent Sunday morning, my congregation and I focused on Paul's Letter to the Romans. It is the first of the Letters, after the four Gospels and the Book of Acts. In it, Paul spends a lot of time explaining his thoughts, or theology, on God and God's Son. He also explores how believers in Christ should get along with other believers. (Note: Romans is worth a read, but Paul can make you scratch your head - try a study version of the New Living Translation (NLT) or the Common English Bible.)

Our focus this recent morning was on the first half of chapter 14 but could easily have included the entire chapter. Here, Paul is talking about how to live (deal?) with people who do not share common beliefs on how to worship and serve a shared God.

Paul was a Jewish convert to Jesus' teachings, working extensively with non-Jewish believers. He starts this chapter by saying, "Welcome those who [do not share your beliefs], but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions." He goes on to give examples, but we'll focus on this sentence.

At one time in our nation (or perhaps I'm just wishing for such a time) we were all Americans. Diverse, different, yes, but living together did not mean sharing beliefs in lock step with one another. We got along. The phrase "live and let live" comes to mind. Unfortunately, that was also a time of grave injustices in our land – some of which are only now being dealt with.

Perhaps that is why we now seem so intent on "quarreling over opinions." We are content when everything stays the same – to our advantage - but as soon as things start to change, fear puts us at each other's throats. Isn't that what it's come down to lately?

How can you possibly support the candidate you support? You must be an idiot! Doesn't matter if you support Trump or Biden, Davis or Londrigan, Pritzker or whoever; run right down the list: the other guy is an idiot. Wear a mask, you're an idiot, don't wear a mask, YOU are an idiot. On and on! Basically, Paul says, "OK, we're all idiots, but if we are serving our Lord, then we are the Lord's idiots."

Now, I apologize for using the word "idiot." It can be offensive and hurtful for some, and Paul certainly didn't use it when he reminded us, "8...whether we live or die, we belong to God" (CEB). He certainly didn't use it when he asked, "why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look down on [them]?" and then reminds us that "each of us will give an account of ourselves to God."

We are not idiots, we are God's: we belong to God. We needn't be divided by earthly, human constructs and opinions. We can all serve the Lord together as those who love the Lord. We don't have to fight over doctrine, we can serve the Lord. We don't have to fight over (name the issue), we can serve the Lord. We don't have to fight God's battles, God's got them covered!

What God wants from us, what God EXPECTS from us, is that we love God above all other, and that we love our neighbors as ourselves. God expects us to work towards the establishment of God's justice here on earth; and let's define that, because justice goes far beyond human law and order. God's justice exists when everyone has what they need, whether we feel they deserve it or not, because "deserve" is a matter of judgement, we are not to judge. We all need love, food, water, clothing, shelter, safety, health care, and until all have those things, then God's justice does not exist. God doesn't care about our political bickering, God wants justice! We can do better America. Stay well, think big. Amen.

*Pastor Kevin may be reached at [kdsamk24@hotmail.com](mailto:kdsamk24@hotmail.com).*