

Hello everyone

Welcome to our online Wednesday break reflection

We continue our reflection on the whole story of the bible from Genesis to Revelation.

Last week we looked at the first section of Luke's history of the early church in the book of Acts.

The disciples are challenged to spread the word of Jesus from Jerusalem to Samaria and on to the ends of the earth.

In Jerusalem things got a bit difficult for the believers and we hear a passing reference to a young man called Saul. Many of the believers have to leave Jerusalem and Luke gives us stories of Samaria. It's not long before the young Jewish man Saul reappears as a convert to Christianity. He changes his name to Paul and he has a major impact on the spread of the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth. It's an impact he still has on the church to day for he of the 27 books in the New Testament 13 of them are attributed to Paul and

there is a broad agreement that he wrote or dictated at least seven himself.

Today we will look at some of what Paul says in his letters, but we will reflect too on the world he lived in which is so different from ours and that it sometimes makes it difficult for us to read Paul's letters.

Paul didn't know he was writing the bible and his letters are not polished articles. But that means that we get to see some of the personality of Paul through reading his letters. He is a man of deep emotion and he does seem to find it difficult to work in the rigid structure of the time he is living in. But he is someone who whether you admire him or not who turned the world upside down.

As Rowan Williams puts it. Paul took a bundle of traditions and practices generated by the mysterious events around and after Jesus death and struggled with imaginative and intellectual skill to see the patterns that held it all together. He is not making a new religious system, he is uncovering the pattern of what is in the stories of

Jesus to help us work out what is true about God,
Jesus and ourselves.

At some points in the bible story Paul is a
missionary, sometimes he's a minister and at yet
other times he writes as a theologian.

While sometimes he can be difficult to read he
urges us to reflect on big themes like the disturbing
idea he finds in Jesus life of a universal welcome
that God is ready to give everyone through Jesus
and the new creation that is being built.

Ideas we've been familiar with all our lives but
started out as new ideas in the social world that
Paul lived in.

Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians.

You are all one in Christ

Let us worship God

Let us pray

Lord Jesus Christ

You do not call us to be the same,
But you do call us to be one.

You have made us all different so that by working
together

We have something to receive and something to
contribute.

Forgive us for allowing our differences to become
divisions.

Help us to focus on what draws us together

Rather than dwelling on what keeps us apart.

You have called us to be your body.

Help us to build it up

Day by day

Action by action

Relying on you, God and the Holy Spirit.

One god forever,

Amen.