

# Sermon for Waitangi Day 2022

Sermon by the Rev Derek Lightbourne, All Saints Belmont and St Alban's Pauatahanui

Readings: Ephesians 2.13 – 18, Luke 2.9 -14

The predominant focus as we enter 2022 has been on the Covid 19 pandemic and omicron in particular. Even the seriousness of climate changing has struggled to get air time despite numbers of scientists and a key conference that came and went. Volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, floods and droughts make for a very unsettled world.

- 1) There's another dynamic presently happening. I'd suggest it is seeking a way to get recognition – my observation is that there's a *Maori renaissance* happening in society – amongst us. It deserves particular recognition on this Waitangi Day. There's numbers of examples of it, in everyday life. Listen for example to National Radio or the Concert programme and announcements first in Te Reo Maori, then English. I've learned that Hamilton is Kirikiriroa. Sections are introduced but not translated and how often does one hear mention of whanau. In a sense that's not new – we have it in our liturgy - E te whanau. It's the frequency. There's in it a sense of self-identity. And while it may be important I've not been pleased by singling out of Maori as a group being slower to get vaccinated.

You might have also found yourself using Te Reo greetings – Tena koe, Morena, Kia ora – hear that on the radio and Tv, and ending in nga mihi nui, ka kite ano or amongst Christians Arohanui – God's love. Another is po marie – goodnight as in sleep well. Then common words kai – food, mahi prestige, mana, increasingly in articles in the media. Tamariki...and others. In yesterday's paper there was a headline for Waitangi Day- 'a time for kai and korero with whanau under Covid 19 rules.'

The generation of our grandchildren is immersed in Te Reo from what I observe on their display boards at school. Far more than what I or my children were. See it in things to learn round the classroom. Tahiri, rua, toru.....

And if you are travelling, - notice the increasing number of bi-lingual signs going to Te Wai Pounamu, South Island and there is Aorangi Mt Cook, Pipiotahi Milford Sound....

Last year I got into discussion with management at Summerset at our Village about their designation of an Apartment Block being called Colonial. I suggested in the light of the sorry tragic confrontation between British troops and Maori in what became known as the Land Wars in this day and age that is inappropriate. I suggested a tree, and to my surprise it was accepted, and is now Totara Apartments.

The Anglican church acknowledges Te Reo in our Prayer Book and has sought to develop a bi-cultural partnership Maori and pakeha. For Maori the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi was immensely significant, and still is. Hence observance today. What is also significant is the event of 1814 the first preaching of the gospel to Maori and pakeha at Rangihoua Bay of Islands. The intent of the gospel reading is to take us back to that first reading, of the birth of Jesus, bringing 'glad tidings of great joy.' We are not so aware perhaps of some of the background and the building of relationship between Samuel Marsden and Maori chief Ruatara. Marsden had met him in Sydney and they sailed across to Aotearoa. Marsden had become fluent in Maori – thus 'Te Harinui'. What has also come to light is of Maori who became Christian taking the gospel to their own people. Wiremu Tamihana was one such. And the Lectionary remembers others who were also notable for their faith - the young girl Tarore with her copy of Luke's gospel, and Te Whiti of Parihaka has become a focus for pilgrimage.

Thus may I suggest there is more to learn and experience in our bi-cultural relationship in the Maori renaissance of the present time.

2) *Precedent:* A second aspect to consider this day is that which prompted the first reading from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and it endorses our theme of partnership. How aware are we of significant racial tensions in the early church? And before that on how Jesus handled racial issues recorded in the gospels. Take for example relationships between Jews and Samaritans. Such were racial and religious difference and real hostility. Jesus we know visited Samaria, met and ministered to the woman at the well, and the lesson from what we know as the parable of the Good Samaritan, the healing of the lepers, and the one who came back to thank Jesus – and he was a Samaritan. Then in the life of the *early church* racial and religious were issues as non-Jews became Christian. The practice of circumcision and food laws were especially difficult and the fledgling church had to become more open. Thus we read in Acts the leadership brought together a council to resolve the tension that could have rent the church in twain. Read about it in Chapter 15. Hence St Paul's teaching 'there is neither Jew or Greek, slave nor free we are all one in Christ.' There was pretty deep feeling when Paul has to draw attention for the readers to observe 'the dividing wall....having broken down the hostility between us.. and of reconciliation of both groups to God in one body through the cross, putting to death the hostility....' and summarising a new relationship – 'you are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. '

3) *Multi-cultural:* Waitangi Day is rightly a focus on the bi-cultural partnership between Maori and Pakeha. There is also a further dimension and we note this is also happening in our country. We are increasingly a *multi-cultural* nation. Also the faith has reached out to those of different ethnicity – from their homelands, or coming into an awareness since coming to New Zealand. Their culture enriches ours, and also provides opportunity to mix across different ethnicity rather than only meeting ones from India behind the counter in petrol stations and dairies and ethnic restaurants. Or China, or Pacific nations. Something I learned from visits to Tonga is the uniqueness of the different island groups living on Pacific islands. They come together to remind of rising sea levels affecting each, or hurricanes but essentially and historically they are different nations. And now many are New Zealanders by birth. Moana Pacifica recognises their common ancestry, and they are in multi cultural relationship in this country.

Concluding then, the collect ( prayer) for today addresses 'God of peace.. we pray 'for us to live together for the good of all.' We look to the future and what might be 'Help us to grow in unity, justice and love, and to make this a country in which all can find a home.' May it become so as we cherish and value from the past, in the present, and for the future.