Popovers and Love

January 29, 2006 (4th Sunday after the Epiphany)

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 Psalm 111 1 Corinthians 8:1b-13 Mark 1:21-28

Knowledge puffs up but love builds up

I don't believe Paul is writing *against* the kind of knowledge of rabbinical study, of philosophy and law and science, but against know-it-all-ism, a puffed-up Popover of knowledge, pretty on the outside but hollow in the middle.

Paul is writing to the church in Corinth – a mess of a church, broken and fractious, always looking for something to fight about, to the point that when they come together for the Eucharistic feast, they don't share a common table – no, some of them go hungry and get no bread, while others get drunk on the wine!

It's an empty popover of a church, a far cry from the kind of community that I think we share at Messiah. When I was talking with Kristen about the church in Corinth, this morning, she looked over her shoulder at the lunch she was helping prepare today and told me that Messiah was nothing like the church I was talking about.

Today, we will hold the 134th Annual Meeting of the Parish of the Messiah. In 1871, a group of Episcopalians posted up a notice in West Newton, calling for the creation of a church. Since then there have been annual meetings bursting at the seams, as well as an annual meeting that would have been familiar to the fractious church in Corinth ending when someone turned out the lights, in order to prevent a fistfight breaking out.

We have come this far, through thick and thin, not because of special knowledge, not because of a know-it-all gnositc faith, certain in our rightness and the world's wrongness.

We have come this far by love. By love of God, by love of one another, by love of the complicated world we live in. What we know and study –in our liturgy, in our teaching, in our service – is knowledge that serves to deepen our love.

Knowledge puffs up but love builds up.

Jesus astounded the people gathered as synagogue in Capernaum, meeting together to study God's holy word when the Word came on a Saturday morning to teach. They were astounded at his teaching, for Jesus taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Is *this* the Authority that Mark is trying to describe in his story? What would it mean to us if the authority Jesus taught with, was not simply the authority of an omniscient know-it-all, but first and foremost the authority of perfect love?

After lunch today, we will review our 2005 and 2006 budgets, elect vestry members, officers and delegates, listen to the rector's report, and then talk about our future – our hopes and dreams for next year –

We do so under the authority of the God of Love, the one who builds up, not puffs up, but builds up.

We will make our decisions, and set our course for the year to come, not based on a puffed up idea that we are here to serve ourselves, to preserve a building or a name, but what builds up, what builds up a community of faith, what builds up a community of love, what builds up a household gathered in the name of Christ, serving God, serving our neighbor.

NO POPOVERS

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