

Lent Day 39

Friday April 14, 2017

Good Friday

Reading: Romans 16:1-23

17 I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. 19 Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

Reflection

Remember when we were kids and someone would say, “Don’t be friends with them, okay? I don’t like them.” As adults we’re not surprised by this — that’s how kids are. Too often that’s how adults are too. We don’t always get along and when this happens we just keep away from them.

That isn’t quite what Paul is saying here though. Through his whole letter he has encouraged unity of the body — no divisions. But Paul knows people and churches. There will be people who are intentionally causing divisions and let’s face it that problem exists today too. He’s saying when people are intentionally causing divisions in the church (undoing the unity) then we need to separate. Not because we don’t like them, but to encourage them to change their divisive behaviour.

Paul’s bigger focus for us is not in seeking out divisive people, but each of us being shrewd and innocent. Focus on the unity in the church, but remain aware that there will be those who are not working for that unity. This is a part of being a mature church.

Prayer

Lord, give us wisdom and discernment to build up your body and preserve it from divisions. Amen.