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 GOD'S STORY, NZ'S STORY AND MY STORY
 

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If you have been in this church for the last 8 years, you will know that on this weekend I will always preach something about race, race relations and the Treaty. This year it seems particularly fraught to speak on because it has been in the political arena so much. So the danger in anything I say is interpreted as a political statement of some kind. The reason I made the commitment to keep speaking about this issue is that I was surprised at the racism I encountered in coming south again. Not just within the community but among Christians.

Some of it comes from fear that our way of life and doing things is changing. Why can't there be just one culture in NZ. Which means, the predominant culture. My culture.

Some of it comes from ignorance of simply not knowing and understanding. I.e. the Govt has paid out enough money to Māori. Fact. Money paid out to Māori in settlement claims a few years ago was less than has been paid out to rescue AMI from the Christchurch earthquakes.

Some of it comes from not understanding. What's in the past should just stay there. Fact. The past has tremendous influence in the present. Just ask someone who suffered trauma.

Some of it comes from deep prejudices that we have been bought up with. I.e. All Māori are lazy. Fact. This is a racist statement.

The temptation for us as Christians, particular for those who are not Māori is simply to ignore the Treaty and say. Nothing to do with me. Not a spiritual thing. Just teach the Bible. Sick of these issues. So today I want to speak into this to show how God's story and our personal story and NZ story are linked together. Treaty is a key part of this.

**God's story.** God created the universe. God's desire is for a relationship with his creation. Humanity rebelled against God. God chose the Israelites to be his chosen people, and a light to the nations. At times the Israelites obeyed God but often did not. We see through the Law and the prophets God's values. Esp God's concern for the marginalized, the poor, the refugee, anger at injustice.

God knew this in advance, appointed time sent Jesus to this world. In Jesus God demonstrated this love for using Jesus God's death dealt with the sin that acted as a barrier between us and God. In Jesus coming God announced his kingdom had come. God is reclaiming what is rightfully his that has been distorted, marred by sin, injustice, greed, violence, war. God's goal is that everything in all creation come back under the Lordship of Christ. (Ephesians 1:9–11, NLT) Everything means every aspect of life. Not just people. But every part of creation. Arts, sport, work, environment. Politics, physical environment. His plan is for no sickness, no poverty, no injustice, no crime.

Jesus taught the Kingdom of God would spread. Influence all of life. Every part of the world. But it is also intertwined with things that are not of God. When Christ returns, God's kingdom will be fully restored. Renewed bodies. Renewed world. People from every tribe and race (Revelation 7:9–10, NLT)

**Our story.** Everyone's story is different. Some born in NZ. Some born overseas. Whatever country you were born in has had an impact on you. All born into a family. Huge influence on your life. Older we get the more we realize just how profound that influence is. Every family will bring good influences into your life. As well as quirks. Prejudices. Values, views. We might think we are our own person, but your parents and grandparents and their parents have shaped you in profound ways. We are all shaped by the experiences we have had. Some of those experiences will have been painful. Some will have been good. Shaped us. Our story is unique.

And our story intersects with God's story. At some point in our lives, God's story and ours has intersected. Some of you were bought up in homes where you learnt about God from a young age. Some of you were bought up in homes where no God influence at. But at some point you became aware of your need for God's grace. Your heart became open to God. Made some kind of commitment and the Holy Spirit entered your heart (Galatians 4:4–7, NLT) (Ephesians 1:5, NLT)

God began a transforming work in your life. (Romans 12:2, NLT) The old ways. Began to be removed. Attitudes that didn't line up with God's heart began to be revealed. God began to reveal his plan for your life. Not just to do what you wanted. But to be his kingdom agents on this earth. (1 Peter 2:9, NLT)

**Then we have to story of NZ** Started with Māori canoes coming to NZ shores from the Pacific islands around 1300AD

Settling in different parts of the country. Formed tribal alliances. Fought over land. Traded extensively among themselves for resources. Oral history of recording their genealogy back to the canoe their ancestors came on

First settlers coming to NZ. whalers, sealers. Bit of free for all. There was lots of misunderstandings between Europeans and Māori, and lots of exploitation.

Soon after the missionaries arrived with the Bible. Here we have God's story intersecting with NZ story. They were coming because understood that gospel message was to go to all peoples. Every tribe and race was invited to become part of the kingdom of God. Revival taking place in England. Ends of World

God had prepared the way for the arrival of Pakeha by giving these words to a Māori prophet by the name of Toiroa. He tried drawing the visions he saw. Steam boats, men



wearing trousers, and smoking pipes. 3 years before Cook arrived he said these words: "The name of their God will be son who was killed, a good God but the people will still be oppressed."

Word of God having profound impact on lives of Māori. Marsden and the first missionaries thought that first Māori had to get cultured then they could come to faith. But once Māori got their hands on the word of God there was a profound impact. Maor came to faith with no contact with missionaries at all. This hunger led from 1835 to 1845 to 64000 Māori, over half of all Māori in NZ attending church services. Christianity brought significant change to a culture of seduction, revenge, violence and cannibalism.

While settlers brought disease, alcohol, muskets to Māori, there was also intermarriage and sharing of crops, iron etc. But much land was simply taken illegally. God's concern for justice came from believer in England. Clapham sect. Out of this was born the treaty. Based on Christian principles of justice and equality. But in a World Christian gathering of Indigenous People Sor Dr Pita Sharples said this. "When our ancestors signed the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 they agreed to invite Pakeha settlers to share their land and resources as an investment in a better future. The promise has not been fulfilled."

The treaty established a partnership between Maor and Crown. It was to give protection to Māori, language, lands resources, a participation in decision making, esp. around things impacted Māori. It is not perfect because of difference between English and Māori translations. But it was a way of two cultures working alongside one another.

The treaty was broken from day one, with blatant injustices leading to generational poverty, language being repressed and disillusionment with both the church and the crown. From 1975 the Waitangi tribunal has been working to bring justice.

Story of NZ intersects powerfully with God's story in a very powerful way. Never taught this. But it is impossible to read the history of NZ without reference to God's story. Secular historians have tried to remove it, discredit missionaries. Keith Newman and other Christian historians are working to correct this.

Now if we put these together, we have God's story intersecting with my story. God's story interacting with NZ story. And of course my story intersects with NZ story because we live here.

Your story might well have started out outside of NZ. Brazil, South Africa, Philippines. So you bring with you your culture. Values. But now you are in NZ so you are part of NZ story. If we are born here, of course we are part of NZ story. So if we put all these together, we have an intersection in the middle. Between all 3 stories.

What is in that intersection? I want to suggest today that the treaty is in the middle point along with the Church. It is a

key part of NZ story. It is a key part of where God's story intersects with NZ story. It is also a part of our story if we live in NZ. The treaty is where we find our place. We are either tanga te whenau. People of the land People of the treaty tangata tiriti. The treaty is a partnership that gives space for Māori culture to flourish. Along all culture's.

My point is. I don't think as Christians living in NZ we can say. Not interested in the treaty I am sick of hearing about the treaty The treaty is of no relevance to me.

As NZers we need to educate ourselves about the Treaty. That means understanding other points of view as well. As Christians we are to care about issues of justice and well being. We can become so focused on us and God. Forget what God cares about. There is no doubt that Maor are at the bottom of all social indicators in NZ. The idea that Māori are somehow privileged is simply not true when you look at stats. There are issues of structural racism and inequality and generational trauma and these are things that the OT clearly says God is deeply concerned about. As well as the keeping of Treaties.

As Christians we are to be agents of reconciliation. So we have a role to play in countering racism, cultural awareness. As Christians in a democracy, we can have our say via MP's, by how we vote, and by protest. We can be an influence in issues concerning the Treaty. The Treaty was birthed by the church NZ, England, formed in the OT language of covenant, with missionaries as the midwife. We are heavily invested in the treaty. Not a side issue for the church.

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## REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

Has your views on the Treaty changed over the years? In what ways? How much have you read, learnt?

Why does discussion about the Treaty often seem to generate much heat?

Is it possible to separate issues of justice (that the Bible has a lot to say about) out from politics?

What prejudices have you inherited from your family? How have you identified and dealt with them?

Why do you think the (pakeha) church was so slow to advocate for and affirm the Treaty? See the link to the Baptist affirmation in the bulletin.

How as a church can we continue to grow in our bi cultural journey? What would you say to those who say it is irrelevant to us at Central? Or that we should just focus on the Bible and not talk about the Treaty?



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