

## Green Eggs and Ham... and the Good News

### Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany – 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

*preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, February 8, 2015*

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

A reading from Sam-I-Am, according to the latter-day saint, Seuss:

You do not like  
green eggs and ham?

I do not like them,  
Sam-I-Am.

I could not, would not, on a boat.  
I will not, will not, with a goat  
I will not eat them in the rain.  
I will not eat them on a train.  
Not in the Dark! Not in a tree!  
Not in a car! You let me be!

I do not like them in a box.  
I do not like them with a fox.  
I will not eat them in a house.  
I do not like them with a mouse.  
I do not like them here or there.  
I do not like them anywhere!

I do not like  
green eggs and ham!  
I do not like them, Sam-I-am.

For the past few weeks, we've been talking about the church St. Paul founded in Corinth. As I've said a couple of times already, Corinth was a cosmopolitan place, even in a world where cosmopolitan diversity was a common goal among the ancient conquests of Alexander the Great, and now across the new Empire of the Romans. Standing at the commercial, religious, and cultural crossroads of Asia Minor, like other great metropolitan centers of that world, Corinth often strove to be *everything* to *everyone*. And, in general, that was apparently as true of the young Christian Church in Corinth as it was for the culture from which they had sprung.

There were Jews among those that Paul had called into faith in Christ at Corinth, those that had for most of their lives lived within the Law. And there were Gentiles among the Corinthian Christians, those that had never given second thought to the obligations and the restrictions of the Law. There were those who were strong, physically, economically, *politically*, and there were those that were weak in all those same ways. There were those that lived as slaves, whose lives *belonged* to someone else. And there were those that had people who belonged to *them*. The Corinthian Church was an incredibly diverse group.

But some of the Corinthian Christians apparently thought that all the *right* people had *already* heard the Good News. They didn't see much need to reach out to include anyone else. Some even wondered why Paul would continue to work with those that didn't look like *them*, those who didn't *act* like them, *those* people that didn't *agree* with *them*.

So back to Dr. Seuss. I wonder what would have happened if, when his friend had issued this final exclamation, Sam had responded, “Okay, no problem.” I suppose that would have been the end of the story. Sam would have happily gone on his way with the goat and the fox and the mouse and such, and his *friend* would never have experienced the joy of eating green eggs and ham.

But Sam-I-Am knew that his friend was *missing* something in his life, in this case, some really... *interesting* poultry and pork. Sam *knew* that his friend’s life would somehow be better, or at least more complete, if he would at least *try* the verdant repast. He cared enough that he not only asked his friend to try it, but he continued to ask, and he *continued* to ask, and he *continued* to ask.

You do not like them, so you say.

Try them! Try them!

And you may.

Try them and you may, I say.

And, of *course*, Sam’s dogged determination finally pays off, and the now-soggy friend concedes at least that basic argument:

Sam! If you will let me be,

I will try them.

You will see.

Probably everyone born after 1955 or so, and every parent of a child born after that, holds in their head somewhere the picture spread that comes next, of Sam and the rest of the cast of characters floating in the water watching, as the disgusted-looking friend gingerly forks a *very* green-yolked egg toward his mouth.

Say! I like green eggs and ham!

I do! I like them, Sam-I-Am!

And I would eat them in a boat.

And I would eat them with a goat...

And I will eat them in the rain.

And in the Dark. And on a train.

And in a car. And in a tree.

They are so good so good you see!

So I will eat them in a box.

And I will eat them with a fox.

And I will eat them in a house.

And I will eat them with a mouse.

And I will eat them here and there.

Say! I will eat them anywhere!

I do *so* like green eggs and ham!

Thank you! Thank you, Sam-I-Am.

Have you ever heard how people talk when they have discovered a great news restaurant? Or about their favorite musical artist or book? Or when they’ve binge-watched the latest Netflix drama, or gone to a movie they really liked? You can’t shut ‘em up, they are so excited. When people have that kind of good news, they want to let *everyone* in on what has changed their life.

Now, Sam-I-Am was just pushing oddly hued breakfast food. But Pastor Paul wants his congregation in the Corinth to understand that the stakes *they* are dealing with are much, *much* higher. The Good News into which they have been called is nothing less than the salvation of the whole *world*! So Paul ends up talking about sharing the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ in an almost Seussical rhyme of his own:

Though I am free,  
I have made myself a slave,  
so that I might win more of them.

To the Jews  
I became as a Jew,  
in order to win Jews.

To those under the law  
I became as one under the law.  
To those outside the law  
I became as one outside the law.  
To the weak  
I became weak.

I have become all things  
to all people,  
that I might save some,  
all for the sake of the Good News of Christ.

So where does that put us? Where does that put *you*? Where does that put our mission here on this little corner, in this little town, on this little bend in the River? It puts us *here* and *now*, with the Good News. It puts us here and now, with the best news there *is*, with the Gospel of the love of the Creator of all that is. That Good News has been shown forth in the life and death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it is being shown forth still, in *your* life and mine, every time we praise his name in worship, every time we embrace each *other* in his name, every time we use *our* hands as *his* hands to reach out to our community. Maybe that's good enough news that we need to make sure that *everyone* knows it.

Say! I love the Good, Good News!  
I do! I love it, all of yous!

And I will tell it from the pew.  
And I will tell it to lots... or few.  
And I will tell it where I play.  
And at work. And *every* day.  
And in the park. And on the street.  
It is so good, let me repeat!

So I will tell it with my voice.  
And I will tell it with *every* choice.  
And I will tell it in my house.  
And I will *live* it with my spouse.  
And I'll share with new *and* golden.  
And with the kids. And with the... olden.

And I will tell it here and there.  
Say! I will tell it *anywhere*!

Thank you! Thank you! I'll say it twice.  
I do *so* love  
the love of Christ!