

Life Group Notes
Sunday 22 April 2018

Speaker: Andy McCullough

Title: A Holy Kiss

Passage: Romans 16:1-16

Rome, like Reading, was multicultural and multi-social. People living there experienced horizontal and vertical discrimination. When the church started in Rome, it would have been monocultural (just amongst Jews). In Romans chapter 16, we see greetings to different believers, and we can see the power of the gospel, that many different people from various backgrounds have come to faith.

Romans 16:1-2: Phoebe was a wealthy woman from Cenchrea who hosted a church in her house.

Romans 16:3-5: Prisca was a wealthy Roman woman. Aquila was a lower-class Jewish slave and leatherworker (see Acts 18:2). They are married. There is no scenario in the ancient world where these two could get married, but the blood of Christ transformed them!

Romans 16:6: Mary was probably unmarried, Jewish, and a slave. Yet she worked hard for the church!

Romans 16:7: Andronicus and Junia were Paul's relatives and cross-cultural missionaries.

Romans 16:10: Apelles was a Greek immigrant. When the culture was saying, "he's just a foreigner," Paul says "Greet him as a genuine brother, an equal! The household of Aristobulus were Jewish slaves, and they are gathering as a house church.

Romans 16:11: The household of Narcissus are Roman slaves (probably from all corners of the Empire), and are a house church.

Romans 16:12: Persis is a Persian, female slave who is worthy of honour for serving in the church.

Romans 16:13: Rufus is probably the son of Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21), from Africa, who carried the cross of Jesus.

Romans 16: 14-15: These are two inner-city churches in rough neighbourhoods whose leaders are lower-class Greeks.

What a diverse church! Then Paul instructs them to "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (16:16).

This "kiss one another" includes and encapsulates all the other 'one anothers' in Romans (12:10, 12:16, 14:13, 15:5, 15:7, 15:14). You normally only kiss family.

"The holy kiss overcomes shameful discrimination and celebrates the glorious freedom of the children of God." Robert Jewett.

At the Cross, God was kissing a world that rejected him, God was declaring "I am not ashamed to be family with you!" You may reject me, disgrace me, dishonour me, hurt me, but I am kissing you. As Christ has accepted us, so we accept one another.

Questions

1. *In what ways have you experienced / do you observe discrimination in Reading? Really listen carefully to each other.*
2. *How did the gospel transform the members of the Roman church? How is the gospel transforming you?*
3. *Which character in these verses do you most identify with and why?*
4. *What did God say to you on Sunday, and what are you going to do about it?*
5. *Read all the 'one anothers' in Romans (12:10, 12:16, 14:13, 15:5, 15:7, 15:14, 16:16). Which one is hardest for you? Pray for each other.*