

Te Rangatiratanga o te Atua

The Kingdom of God

Exo 17:1-7, Phil 2:1-13, Matt 21:23-32

“Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga, kia rite ano ki tō te rangi”

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.”

At this years 67th General Synod of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, the members of Synod passed a historic bill empowering Te Pihopatanga o Aotearoa to exercise *Tino Rangatiratanga* over the distribution of St Johns College Trust Boards education funds. I want to talk to you today about rangatiratanga.

The word rangatiratanga comes from the noun rangatira, which is the combination of two words *ranga* a verb meaning to weave and *tira* a noun meaning a group of people, so literally a rangatira is a person who has the ability and/or the responsibility of weaving the people together.

A well-known national symbol of Tino Rangatiratanga are the Māori flag its black on top, red on the bottom with white koru in the middle, it was designed by three female Māori artists Hiraina Marsden, Jan Dobson and Linda Munn for the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1990. The flag is known as the Tino Rangatiratanga flag and it is often associated with protest, activism even aggression it is seen regularly on hiko or marches flying high above the crowds, plastered on t-shirts and stickers. We might not know that the black on the flag denotes the darkness and latent potential, the white represents the light and the realm of being, the red denotes the earth and physical life forces and the koru the curling frond represents new life, renewal and hope for the future.

As people of faith we understand that imagery as it speaks of scripture Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

Before God created he hovered, he hovered over the darkness, he hovered over the formless. E te whanau to understand rangatiratanga to understand where we are going we must also hover.

And God said Let there be light and there was light, and God saw that the light was good and he separated the light from the darkness.

When God created he spoke, he spoke creation into being with light a light that was good, that didn't remove the darkness but sat separate from it, the light understood the darkness and therefore the light had a purpose. E te whanau we to must speak with light and goodness, it is easy to buy into rangatiratanga being a Māori thing, that applies only to them but to quote myself in doing this we miss out on the wānanga, we miss out on the hovering, we miss out on understanding.

I want to return to the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1990, the Archbishop and Primate of the Church at that time was Bishop Brian Davis, the Governor General another Bishop Sir Paul Reeves but the most prominent and outspoken Bishop at the anniversary was the Bishop of Aotearoa Bishop Whakahuihui Vercoe who went off script before Queen Elizabeth the

second, sayi g “I want to remind our partner that you have marginalised us, you have not honoured the treaty.” “I want the treaty to stand firmly as the means by which we are made one nation.” “We want the treaty to be celebrated, to be established so that my Tino Rangatiratanga is the same as your Tino Rangatiratanga.”

I won’t belabour this sermon by recounting the articles and clauses of the treaty, that can be homework for those who are interested. But for some New Zealanders the words Tino Rangatiratanga are a source of irritation, a label for Māori entitlement something unattainable, caught up in decades and generations of politics, treaty settlements and Māori protest. I myself subscribe to the perspective of one of my aunties from the East Coast former National MP Hekia Parata, who said “tino rangatiranga is gone, what we need to attain is personal rangatiratanga,” personal self-determination, personal enlightenment as contributors to Māori prosperity and collective rangatiratanga.

So what is rangatiratanga?

Quoting Chief Judge Joe Williams at his 2024 lecture to the Karuwha Trust, in scripture (the Māori translation) the word rangatiratanga is used 202 times, to describe God’s dominion and authority and the Kingdom of God, for example in the Lords prayer;

“Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name,

E to mātou Matua i te Rangi, kia tapu tōu ingoa

Your kingdom come,

Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga

You will be done, on earth as in heaven

Kia rite ano ki tō te rangi”

As people of faith we are tasked with seeing through the lens of the gospel and scripture applying that lens is our challenge.

From the late 1980’s up into 1990 150th anniversary of the Treaty of Waitangi our church began a journey of addressing the need for Māori to have tino rangatiratanga in the Church, with the publication of the New Zealand prayer book and the revision of the Constitution in 1992. It has been 34 years since Tikanga Māori, Tikanga Pakeha and Tikanga Polynesia were created as co-equals but inequity in leadership, in resources and structure have persisted across the church. Our relationships have become more distant, our numbers less visible, our buildings more burdensome.

To overcome this challenge we need rangatira those with the ability and responsibility for weaving the people together to step forward, to speak with light and goodness, to create spaces and places where God sees it is good. That his kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17) is present in the hearts of the people.

And so you might ask what any of this has to do with the Gospel, friends if you are entrusted with role of authority and leadership Jesus is the litmus test for how authority should be exercised. Today’s

gospel highlights that the High Priests and Elders of the temple were missing what God was doing in their midst.

As priests annointed by God and elders chosen by the people they are responsible for weaving Gods church Gods people together they are the rangatira of the time. But Jesus point us towards tino rangatiratanga o te Atua the Kingdom of God.

Earlier in the Chapter when Jesus enters the temple over turning the tables and ejecting those selling and buying and healing the blind and lame. The priests and the scribes are angered by the adoration of the people for Jesus and confront him. When they question his authority, he is too smart he has already picked up on their deficiencies and insecurities. They cannot say that John's baptism was from heaven John who came before Jesus, John the voice crying out in the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord, John who baptized the repentant, John who said he is not worthy to bend down and untie the sandals of Jesus, John who was ultimately beheaded and regarded by the people as a prophet.

Jesus knows the High Priests and Elders cannot or will not acknowledge John and they therefore cannot and will not acknowledge him as the son of God, sent to weave, sent to serve, to heal and be a living sacrifice of the love of God and the love God has for all people. They are so blinded by their own importance, their own positions and pedigree that they don't realise they are exactly like the second son in the parable they profess to be Gods annointed and appointed yet fail to act as such.

E te whanau there are rangatira sitting here among you sent to serve, sent to heal, sent to love and to weave Gods people and this church together. If we have any authority we have the responsibility of wielding that authority with humility and gratitude with an informed understanding of our past, a healthy critique of our present and discernment of God working in our midst.

Brothers and sisters there is much work to be done...it might seem like we are doing what we have always done, but bit by bit a new leaf is being turned over, new wine is being poured my friends the work is the work is the work of the gospel today

- Understanding a new way
- Re-negotiating long standing relationships
- Acting with an equity mindset

For the sake of our history, of our traditions but most of all generations of future Christians and Anglican we must do this work, we must act and when we see that there is light and there is goodness we must tell others about it and bring them along for this journey.

And I leave you with these words in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.