



The Image of God

Tall and tan and young and lovely
The Girl from Ipanema goes walking
And when she passes
Each one she passes says: "Ah!"

These are the opening lines to the English version of arguably the most famous bossa nova song of all time, The Girl From Ipanema. Originally composed by Brazilian musician Antonio Carlos Jobin to Portuguese lyrics by Brazilian poet Vinicius de Moraes , the song became a hit in the mid-60s after US lyricist Norman Gimbel created the English language version to the original music, and Brazilian singer Astrid Gilberto recorded the song.

The Girl From Ipanema combines bossa nova's signature rhythms with wistful atmospherics that give the song as a whole a distinctly bitter-sweet tone. Interestingly, the song was inspired by a young woman who lived in the same neighbourhood as the composer, and who was renowned as a local beauty. This woman, Heloisa Pinto, later became a successful model and businesswoman; and in her autobiography, she notes that the song reflects on the transience of both youth and beauty, and the melancholy of the gift of life in the face of mortality.

In its English version, however, The Girl From Ipanema is primarily a love song - and it obtains its poignance from the fact that it is a song about unrequited

love. As the song declares:

Oh, how he watches her so sadly!
How can he tell her he loves her?
Yes, he would give his heart gladly -
But every day as she walks to the sea,
She looks straight ahead not at he.

In other words, this is a song about a love that is unrequited because the young man who adores the Girl lacks the self-confidence to tell her how he feels; while the Girl herself is too self-absorbed to notice that she is loved. Which isn't to suggest that the Girl is in any way obliged to notice the man who adores her, or even to reciprocate his feelings if she does. If this was the case, *The Girl From Ipanema* would not be a love song - it would be a song about possession, objectification, and dehumanisation.

Rather, the "message" of the song is that, all too often, we can be far too enclosed in our own internal worlds to notice what is going on around us: we can be too self-possessed or narrowly focused to be present to the world - and the people - who share our daily lives. We can thus often fail to notice the possibilities and opportunities that stand in our midst, even if doing so would require us to break out of our comfortable shells. As the song notes:

And when she passes, he smiles
But she doesn't see - she just doesn't see

In other words, one of the themes of the song is mindfulness, and it draws its poignant emotional strength from the lack of mindfulness of the Girl, who cannot see the smile that indicates she is in the presence of love. As noted above, this isn't to suggest that she ought to notice or respond - but what might be possible if, one day she did notice? What might change? What new futures

might be available to them both?

Mindfulness is a very trendy word these days, bandied about by everyone from self-help gurus to corporate leadership "experts". But the peddlers of this superficial understanding of mindfulness hardly do justice to the concept - a justice which I think is more properly served by the Japanese suffix "-do" (meaning "way" or "practice") and which appears in the names of many martial arts: lai-do, Ken-do, and Aiki-do, for example. In this context, mindfulness is a disciplined, intentional practice in which one is attentive to the world, paying attention to the people and events by which we are surrounded. Put another way, mindfulness is the process by which we take ourselves out of ourselves and into the world of others.

And that, precisely, is what the point of faith is. Not to assure ourselves of our sanctity or righteousness, but to remove us from our own self-absorption so that we are able to pay attention to, and enter into, the world around us, living in covenantal co-existence with others. In other words, faith is about mindfulness; not the trendy self-indulgence of the gurus, but the self-emptying attentiveness that gives of itself for the other.

For Jesus, mindfulness always started with awareness of the presence of God. He practiced this awareness in part through prayer and through moments of solitude. Mostly, however, Jesus practiced mindfulness by being attentive to others. And the particular way in which Jesus was attentive to others was by seeing in the people around him the presence of God. For Jesus, all people were created in the imago Dei - the image and likeness of God. And being thus created, they were filled with dignity and grace and were worthy of love and of being loved.

This is especially evident in his response to the outcasts and the disregarded of his day. To Jesus, tax collectors, sex workers, the sick, the poor, foreigners,

wrongdoers, the despised and marginalised were not objects of curiosity or revulsion, neither were the mere extensions of his ego. He loved them for who they were, for the humanity they embodied, and disregarded how they were viewed or misunderstood by the world.

There will be times when we are invited by the world to disparage others, or to objectify and dehumanise them so that we can justify ill-treatment, discrimination, or even persecution. Our faith calls us to a mindfulness that replicates Jesus' awareness of the presence of God - a presence embodied in the very people who were treated as least human of all. As we continue the Lenten movement toward Easter, let us be mindful of the presence of God - and see in the faces around us, the love that God holds for us all.

Worship This Sunday

This Sunday I will be leading worship, and it will also be a Communion service. Please note that the congregational AGM will be held after the service.

Presbytery Newsletter

The latest edition of the Presbytery Newsletter is now available in a new format and re-branded as PYY News.. To read, please [click this link](#).

CPP Presents - Little Women

The CPP will be presenting the stage version of Louisa May Alcott's classic, "Little Women". Performances begin on April 5th, and include a mix of evening, matinee, and early afternoon shows. Full details can be found by [clicking this link](#).

Pew Polishing

As mentioned at church recently, I will be making a start on polishing the pews on March 6th at 9.30 am and continue on through the month of March when hopefully we will have done all the wooden furniture we have in the worship space. Chair cleaning is also on the agenda and will be done during the School Holidays perhaps in early April when there are no CLC classes.

- Glenis McDonald

Blessings,

Brendan



Copyright © 2024 Heathmont Uniting Church, All rights reserved.
You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website.

Our mailing address is:

Heathmont Uniting Church
89 Canterbury Road
Heathmont, Victoria 3135
Australia

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

