

Sermons at Saint Paul's

A Wellspring of spiritual; nourishment; A river of service in Jesus' Name

Trinity Sunday

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The Psalmist poses an important existential question, what is man that you should be mindful of him? The Son of man that you should seek him out? Who am I that God should be mindful of me? Who are we that God should care for and about us? The Psalmist ponders on the majesty and grandeur of creation and humanity's place in the created order, and is beside himself with wonder and amazement.

The Psalmist doesn't suggest that humans have done anything in particular to be favored this way, he knows that the human track record has been abysmal and so part of his wondering that that into account. He wonders why God would care so much about humanity.

Within God's created order, humans are not only lower than the angels but have been given authority over all of creation, just in the same way as the Genesis creation story establishes Adam and Eve as having authority over creation. The Psalmist is well aware of the magnificence and grandeur of creation, and he knows that humanity is insignificant in relation to it, but yet God imposes a responsibility on humans that causes the Psalmist to wonder, what is man that God will honor with such an important authority over creation, not to abuse creation as we have been prone to do, but to tend it? What is man?

The Psalmist doesn't answer the question, nor was he required to, but we hear an echo in John's gospel which seem to suggest an answer when John argues that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever so believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John in a sense assures humanity that the premise of God's visitation rest in God's love for humanity. This love was made manifest in Jesus' presence among humans; embodying what our true humanity looks like.

The concept of God manifesting Himself in human form was new to humans, and in fact a new phenomenon in the sense that never in the human and divine dialectic has God been so moved to assume human flesh in order to participate in the joys, trials, limitations, tribulations and the sheer helplessness that is so endemic to the human experience.

But as new as this particular expression of love was, the agency of this love wasn't new because he existed before and actually participated in the creation of the sea, moon, stars, wild beasts of the field, sheep and oxen, the fishes of the sea, and ultimately human beings; the form in which this agency will later find its expression because humanity was created in the image of the Agency of creation.

The presence of the agency-of Jesus' witness among us was revealing in that he called us to wisdom. The essence of the wisdom to which Jesus calls us lies not in our ability to make right and wrong decisions but by our ability to recognize our place in God's creation. This call is sacred, holy and active and does not differentiate. Proverbs then alerts us to the awareness that wisdom calls out to all who live: from the mountain tops, from the wayside, and from the gates where people gather. Wisdom, according to Proverbs, reaches out to all. For that reason, Proverbs argues that wisdom is not inaccessible or only for those who have the proper credentials or education, instead wisdom makes herself available, accessible and desirable for all who live.

Is it any wonder then, that agency of God's love-Jesus, did not necessarily differentiate among the uneducated fishermen like Peter whom he called and the educated Nicodemus who reached out to him in the middle of the night? Is it any wonder that Jesus did not differentiate between the Samaritan woman or the woman suffering from hemorrhage to whom he expressed the compassion of God?

Is it any wonder that Jesus was able to teach the temple leadership as a twelve year old and those in the synagogue as an adult leading them to wonder where he got all his wisdom? The wisdom which reaches out to all who live isn't different from the Jesus who reaches out to all who live, and who we hear sharing a farewell message with his disciples.

Although Jesus tells his disciples a lot, he acknowledges that there are many things they need to know but cannot bear them, however, the Spirit of truth will reveal and lead them into all truth. The disciples are to trust the Spirit of truth because the Spirit who comes from the Father will be with them forever. The Spirit will not speak on His own authority but will speak that which He hears from the Father. For the disciples then, the future is wide open and promising because through the Spirit of Truth, the Father will continue to reveal Himself to them and to all in the same way that Jesus revealed himself to them. Although Jesus will no longer be physically present as God's revealer, those who believe in him can trust the Spirit of Truth, through whom the Father will continue to reveal Himself.

The manifestation of the departing Son, and the arriving Spirit which will speak what He hears from the Father all hold God as the same source of revelation, and as the One upholding their unity.

This brings us to our celebration of the Trinity. What the Trinitarian doctrine teaches us is the possibility of God's self-expression in multiple ways as the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. The mutual indwelling of the Father, Son and the Spirit reflects a relationship built on the self-communication of God to humanity. This mutual indwelling is an example for the living, for you and me, for we have heard it said that no man is an island, human thrive when we are in relationship with one another.

I read an article and came by a line which stated that life isn't about what we own but it is about who we have. And I agree, for the wisdom inherent in this statement reflects that idea what we own is material, ephemeral and fleeting; but who we have, the relationships that we build with others, the life that we share with those we love and ultimately with God is what matters. It is about the generous giving of the self in relationships with others.

I once chanced upon a woman who was dying. She was a retired professor from Temple. The story about her was she had no family. With my African mentality I asked myself, how is it possible that someone will have no family? I concluded that it wasn't because she did not have a family, she refused to be in relationship with those who loved her.

For me, the Trinity symbolizes a generous invitation into a relationship with God and with one another; for we cannot know the depth of God's love without actually participating in it. And since we have been justified by faith, we have gained access into a kind of grace that makes it possible for God's love to be poured into our hearts, making it possible for us to participate in love, and even boast in our suffering because the eternal hope to which we have been called does not disappoint. Because Love does not disappoint.

The Psalmist continues to ask the question, what is man that God will dare to visit? What is man that God will dare to care for? What is man that God will express such compassion? What is man that God will go to such length in manifesting His glory? What is man that God will bestow glory and honor? Indeed, of all creation, it is only man-you and me, it is only us with whom the God who dwells in relationship can be in relationship with, and so invites us into a relationship.

In my mind, the Psalmist can rest easy because I now understand what wisdom is, and my own place in God's creation. In my mind, the Psalmist can rest easy because his praise of God is also on my lips; for I know that my deepest me is God, and that God is no longer just out there, but equally in here, within me, nudging me into relationship with Him and with others. Because such knowledge

is too wonderful for me, I can also shout like the Psalmist “Oh Lord our Governor, how excellent is your name in all the world”. Amen.