



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Sermon by Pastor Jami Anderson, Jan. 9, 2011

- I. John and Jesus – cousins – their interchange – no really you do it – no really you do it. John consents. Such a human interchange – and so they proceed with a baptism – the baptism of Jesus.
 - a. And then God weighs in and adds his voice and now we have a divine interchange.
 - b. That captures the season of Epiphany – God in man made manifest – Jesus the human being. Jesus the divine. Both together – both at once.
 - c. Don't know which you identify more closely with Jesus – the godliness or the humanness? But in either case – here is what I noticed. There is no going solo for Jesus.
- II. Look at the words he says to John, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for US in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” US – Us. Jesus acknowledges, invites, insists upon the two of them engaging in what they do with their lives – by doing it together. US – we are in this together. Us.
 - a. And then God saying – that's my boy. I love my boy. And we are all probably pretty comfortable with Jesus as the Son of God – Jesus as God incarnate. Jesus as part and parcel in the trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We know the life of Jesus is wrapped up in a divine community of at least three. He's never alone.
- III. Book “The Shack” by William Young – from 2008-2007? Presentation of a funky trinity of a black woman God, a rugged carpenter type Jesus, and an exquisite, delicate Asian Holy Spirit. They are always sharing life together, working together, supporting each other.
 - a. “We are in a circle of relationship, not a chain of command or great chain of being as your ancestors termed it. What you are seeing here is relationship without any overlay of power. We don't need power over the other because we are always looking out for the best.”
 - b. So divine Jesus – divine Jesus is always part of the community of the trinity and in that sense He is never alone. Never on His own. Except few moments at the time of crucifixion?
- IV. Now what about Jesus the human living on earth? You may be tempted to think of him as working, traveling, ministering as a solo revolutionary. He was God incarnate after all? So, He certainly didn't need anyone else around to do His own thing. But, But, here he is telling John the Baptist – it is proper for US.

- a. Consider what we know of His life – we hear of him going apart at times to pray – but otherwise – alone – it doesn’t appear so. He gathers disciples who travel with him. He gathers up crowds of people that he teaches and feeds. He asks others to join him in prayer and in ministry and in healing.
 - b. Working solo – I don’t think so. Jesus was always in relationship with God and with HUMAN BEINGS! And he is our guide, our witness. We are not created to go solo. We are not to work alone, solve our problems alone, keep ourselves separate.

- V. And I think at some level we all acknowledge that sentiment – that idea. After all, nearly all of us are baptized and that is the pledge, the promise of baptism.
 - a. We parents bring our children into the church and we baptize them into an identity of being part of the Body of Christ. We promise to let others help us raise our children. We promise to share our lives and our children’s lives with the church community. We want others to support us and help us and guide us.
 - b. And on another level we would probably give voice to the idea that God is always with us, so in that sense we would say we know we are never alone.

- VI. But I want to return to the quote from The Shack – “We are in a circle of relationship.”
 - a. Or Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book, “Life Together” speaks of us as in a community of the Spirit. And this relationship, this community of Spirit is not some divine ideal – it is real and it touches every aspect of our humanity. It is focused on love and care for each other. We are not to live as if we are solo acts.
 - a. On a very real, a very nitty gritty level – our lives are to be about US.
 - b. Don’t ever dismiss your emotions or troubles or your choices as something you can handle alone. Don’t think – I can figure this out. I can take care of it. I won’t bother others with my problems. Or even our jobs, or our ministries, or how we spend our time. Yes, Jesus went apart at times to be alone in prayer and refreshment. I know I need that and probably so do you. But the connections we have in our lives with others are to be real, binding, honest, full.
 - c. JESUS didn’t keep himself separate – and He above all people certainly could have – He could handle and solve anything and everything. But He didn’t. He asked others to join him, to help him, to fulfill all righteousness. In others’ words, to make all things right. To make all things right is not done alone. EVER.

- VII. It saddens me to know how many of you – how I myself am tempted to live as a solo act.
 - a. I think perhaps we feel that is a sign of our strength, or competency, or maturity? For some reason we resist being honest with other people about the struggles we have, the decisions we wrestle with, the times in which we feel weak. Or on the flip side – the sentiment, I’ll just handle this myself – it will be more efficient and done how I want it done. It will be easier this way.
 - b. And I say to each of us- don’t. Jesus was not a solo act and neither are we to be.
 - c. We are joined in life together, we are invited by Jesus to be part of US – the Holy Trinity and each other.

- VIII. What grace and gifts there are in being part of US. With this God incarnate – alive still in each of us – the blessed and struggling community of the Spirit.

Thanks be to God.