



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Sermon by Pastor Jami Anderson, Sept. 5, 2010

- I. African Bible Study or Lectio Divina – explain – word that catches their attention
 - a. Read gospel again – have them say the word
 - b. my word- hate
 - c. The great commandment – you shall love the Lord your God and your neighbor
 - d. How can a God of love ask us to hate?

- II. Only a few weeks ago Jesus stated that he came to bring division in families- separating Father and son, mother and daughter.
 - a. Last week – overturning the Honor and Shame culture for social engagements
 - b. Jesus continues to upset the cultural customs – the societal norms – the bonds of family loyalty common in his society.

- III. Consider in all four gospels the description Jesus gives of family – it is a response given when told his mother and siblings were outside waiting for him.
 - a. “whoever does the will of God, or my Father in heaven, or does what I command IS MY FAMILY!
 - b. Another place – true kindred – in Luke – “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”
 - c. Consider Matthew 19 – Jesus is talking about marriage and divorce – he says, “there are those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” So, Jesus himself, who never married, this Jesus recognized that the focus was to be on the kingdom of heaven, not on the cultural norms or structures of the society.

- IV. If I am reflective it is not hard to come up with reasons that love of family – the socially promoted nuclear family – could be a problem.
 - a. I am a recovering “Family Idolizer.” - thought I could create the perfect family
 - b. I failed and the control I exerted actually harmed others. I learned I could remain in relationship with my children and spouse or I could alienate them
 - c. I know that some families teach prejudices and hatreds that are passed on to generation after generation.
 - d. Some families have demands that constrict individual growth, suppressing learning or exploration.
 - e. Then I realize that family values, family norms, and family teaching can become the highest authority – not God.

- V. Back to that word hate. From further in Psalm 139 – deleted in order not to shock our sensibilities are the lines – “Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not

loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with perfect hatred' I count them my enemies.”

a. Again, we might not like hearing the word hate – but the understanding us – the writer has a strong reaction against that which is not of God.

b. The writer separates himself from those who are against God, from those who are not supporters of God.

c. These lines are a fierce expression of love, love of God.

VI. Being a disciple is a radical form of love.

a. It starts with God first, God as the highest power and authority.

b. Jesus is asking for disciples, followers who will make the kingdom of God their highest priority, followers who will go wherever Jesus goes, renouncing all other interests, preparing themselves even for martyrdom.

c. That means letting go of those things that are held sacred in our culture – things like have possessions or honoring family above all else.

d. To be a disciple of Christ means we have to reject anything and everything that can be idolized, revered, or honored that does not start with and honor God first.

e. It is a radical rejection of the things of the world. That is not saying that we don't live and love in our families, or enjoy clothes, cars, fun, vacations, and other material possessions. But enjoying what comes as gift and loving these things as a priority are two different sides of the coin. That is a lesson I continue to learn.

VII. And it is appropriate for us today to reflect on family as we share in the baptism of Justin Karl McDaniel.

a. He is being baptized into the family that Christ asked us to be part of – the family of God, the family of disciples, the Body of Christ.

b. Today we will all pledge our hearts and minds and actions to welcoming and sharing in the upbringing of this child. When we answer the question about whether we will do all in our power to see that he is brought up in the faith and the church and we answer we will – we do so as part of the universal family of Christ.

c. It will be up to Karl's parents to share him with another church family that will support all of them. They will become Karl's family in a most important sense of understanding family as the family Christ knew we all needed.

VII. I told you that I am a recovering “family idolizer” – and that means that I still have to give myself a lecture and remind myself of the truest, most complete understanding of family.

a. This is family that is a gift. It is family that is broad and deep and contains more people in it than I can dare to imagine.

b. It is family that challenges me to loving in new ways – it's an adventure

c. An adventure that even involves beginning to hate the things that God hates and radically loving the God that is the highest authority – always the highest authority.