

Sermon: Lent 1

The Rev. Mike Wernick

February 18, 2018

Year B

Genesis 9:8-17

Psalm 25:1-9

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:9-15

It's part of our corporate belief... part of our collective myth... although a mistaken one... that Heaven is up there... and Earth is down here... or else... we believe that the two... will only become intimately connected... after death... when we drop this mortal coil... and only the soul remains... but this is not Jesus' experience as he comes up out of the Jordan River... in his commentary on Mark... Brother Francis Moloney writes... *God has ripped the heavens apart irrevocably at Jesus' baptism... never to shut them again... and through this gracious gash in the universe... God has poured forth his Spirit into the earthly realm...*

And John Shea writes... the Spirit doesn't doesn't simply descend "on" Jesus... it descends "into" him permeating his being... and a new divine / human condition is revealed... and this new way of being prepares Jesus for his wilderness experience... and the internal wilderness Jesus entered... was more like the Discovery Channel's Naked and Afraid... than it was like Animal Planet's Treehouse Masters... because Jesus was tempted by accusation... and accusation can lead to division... you see... God's adversary... the Sa-tan... manifests itself through the inner... invisible energy of people... groups... and social and political structures... which inflict suffering on people... and turns them into wild beasts which devour God's creation... and what's an interesting side note... is that the Greek word for wild beasts... is one word... there's not one word for beast... and another adjective which describes it... it's one word that contains both words...

And in a similar way... our one baptism... contains two things... at first... we understand ourselves simply as the children of our parents... but in our baptism our new identity is as God's children... that's the first thing... and the second... is that being sealed by the

Holy Spirit in baptism... and marked as Christ's own forever... is not the end of struggle... but the beginning of it... and it's the beginning... because while it's necessary... in the beginning... to believe... to have faith in Jesus... what we are really called to... what we were really created for... is to have the faith of Jesus... to move from believing in realities we can't begin to comprehend... to trusting in them and owning them...

As St. Anselm said... eventually... faith seeks understanding... blind obedience seeks full relationship... the ascending human is met by the descending divine... and we are called more and more into a consciousness that is increasingly coherent with the mind of Christ... we are called to do God's work... without an ego... as Jesus said in John 16:12: *I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now...* and in John 14:12... *Very truly... the one who trusts in me will not only do the works that I do... but will do even greater works...*

Because while the Greek word *pisteuō* ... which appears 135 times in the Gospels... is most often translated as *believe*... it can just as legitimately be translated as *trust*... God invites us into a trusting relationship... because when there is no trust... when relationships have been damaged so much... that someone is in the hell of isolation and accusation... we get the kind of shootings we had on Wednesday... but we cannot make a mood of the development of this consciousness... we cannot talk ourselves into it... it is part of our formation... part of the increasing light we nourish and share...

Mark's Gospel is Good News for a broken world... but when we hold on to our egos... it becomes Good News only for us... that's why I don't think we can't have bright... shining... glorious Gospel lives... until we also heal our family of origin wounds...

John Shea posed a Q&A... *Why is it so difficult to repent and believe the Gospel... that we are loved by God... and are called to embody that love in the time and space of*

earthly life? Because we harbor so many other beliefs that do not fit into this Good News...

And contemplative Beatrice Bruteau suggested some of these other beliefs... Health... beauty... money... and power are necessary for happiness... My welfare is more important than yours... I can't feel good about myself unless I'm better than somebody... There have to be winners and losers... some might say that those murdered on Wednesday would be the losers...

We like the idea of looking forward to the Easter party... the Heavenly Banquet in the here and now... but more of us need to take part in getting ready for it... need to repent and turn back to God... until the scales tip towards God's will... this is our Lenten journey... facing our fears... and then experiencing the joy... of overcoming them...

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