

# Sermon: Trinity Sunday

The Rev. Mike Wernick

June 15, 2014

Year A

Genesis 1:1-2:4a

The Creation (by James Weldon Johnson)

Psalm 8

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

Matthew 28:16-20

I danced in the morning when the world was young,  
I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,  
I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,  
At Bethlehem... I had my birth.

Dance, dance, wherever you may be,  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he;  
And I lead you all, wherever you may be,  
And I lead you all in the dance, said he.

When he wrote the lyrics to the "Lord of the Dance" in 1963... Sydney Carter was inspired partly by Jesus... he wrote... "I don't know whether Jesus ever leaped in Galilee... to the rhythm of a pipe or drum... but we're told that David danced... and as an act of worship too... the fact that many Christians have regarded dancing as a bit ungodly... in a church, at any rate... doesn't mean that Jesus regarded it that way."... Carter was also offering a tribute to Shaker music... he used the tune from It's a Gift to be Simple... but Carter was also inspired by a statue which sat on his desk... of the Hindu God Shiva... in Shiva's pose as The Lord of the Dance... he later said: "I didn't think the churches would like the hymn at all... I thought many people would find it pretty far flown... probably heretical... and anyway... dubiously Christian... but in fact people did sing it... and unknown to me... it touched a chord... anyway... it's the sort of Christianity I believe in..."

On Trinity Sunday... we Christians... well... some of us theologian fish... talk about the *perichoresis* of the Holy Trinity... I won't talk too much about the eternal mystery of the Three in One... but the Greek word *perichoresis* means *rotation*... and we get the image of dancers spinning and twirling around each other... and around the dance floor...

And when there's dancing... there's usually music... we may think of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in their first starring roles... dancing to Cole Porter's Night and Day... these days... we may think of Dancing with the Stars... with music that forms the backdrop... and perfectly choreographed movements that form the dance... but what if someone trips... or falls... can you imagine Gene Kelly lying in a puddle in Singing in the Rain... or the latest couple on Dancing with the Stars... stepping on each other's feet and not being disqualified...

Many of us equate dancing with perfection... with competitions... with winning and losing... and how many times have you heard someone say: *Oh... I can't dance*... are they saying they can't move... or are they saying they haven't memorized thirty-seven distinct movements in synchronized cyclical patterns practiced for hours with a competent partner... when they say... *I can't dance*... they're just expressing doubt...

*When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came... and said to them anyway... "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."*

*Go therefore... Jesus didn't conduct auditions... didn't invite in only the top four finalists... didn't ask to see a diagram of feet on paper... even to the doubters... even to those who didn't think they could dance... he said *Go... baptize in the name of the Father... the Son... and the Holy Spirit... and teach them...**

Maybe those who doubted... didn't think they could hear the music... can you dance if you don't hear the music... Gallaudet University was established in 1864 by an Act of Congress... its charter was signed by Abraham Lincoln... and it's the world's only university designed to accommodate hard of hearing and deaf students... and there are dance programs... some students... or I could say *disciples*... have slight residual hearing... those with none... may feel the vibrations on the floor... but when they're dancing on something that doesn't vibrate... like concrete... they look to each other for visual and other cues... they teach each other... and remain in the kind of sync... that Fred and Ginger had...

Sometimes... we'll doubt too... we won't hear... or feel the music... we may wonder if it even exists... but there are more kinds of dances than we can imagine... that move to a more transcendent melody...

Moons dancing around planets... planets dancing around the sun... and stars and galaxies dancing around each other...

There are all kinds of elaborate mating dances... and some of them even involve dancing... in relationships... maybe through counseling... when one person starts to get healthier... they say their partner needs to learn new dance steps... our two congregations are in a new dance... and we will step on each other's feet... but no one gets disqualified...

And as today's poem by James Weldon Johnson reminds us... we too toil over our own lumps of clay... and we create new ideas... new things... new ways of being... new ways of healing... and each new genesis echoes the dance of the Trinity... in Eastern philosophy... they call this rishi... devata... and chandas... the knower... the known... and the knowing which connects them...

Our cat Simon doesn't understand... never considers why his food container remains full... he has no clue that we go to the pet store and buy bag after bag of food so we can feed him... all he knows... all he experiences... is that we're faithful to him... what he experiences when I pull the container out from under the bathroom sink... is that food is going to be scooped into his bowl so he can eat... I provide for him out of love... he doesn't have to understand it... his experience transcends words... he simply accepts it as his reality...

And that's how it is with us... we may not have any interest in the eternal mystery of the Three in One... we may not want to understand the intricacies of systematic theology... but we are fed by the Trinity's dance of love... as Simon is fed by mine...

Composer and singer... Leonard Cohen wrote a song called Dance Me to the End of Love... I wish I could play the official video for you... for many reasons... it's so heartbreakingly poignant... and the first stanza is:

Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin  
Dance me through the panic 'til I'm gathered safely in  
Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove  
Dance me... to the end of love...

We too may have doubts... may think we can't dance... we may sit back and let the Freds and Gingers do the dancing... but Jesus said even to those disciples who doubted... *Go*... but Jesus didn't say *Go alone*... there'd be an olive branch and dove to lead us...

Matthew's Gospel ends with Jesus' promise to be with us always. And when we hear these words... "I am with you always... to the end of the age..." we tend to understand them as "to the end of time..." but in the original Greek... the meaning is deeper and

more profound... what Jesus is really saying... is that "I am with you always, until the completion of eternity."

This *completion of eternity* is reflected in what St. Augustine wrote: "Thou hast made us, O Lord... for thyself... and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."

What this says to me... is that Jesus remains with us... until all love is perfected... until our perfect dance is danced more in our hearts... than with our awkward bodies... it says the Lord of the Dance knows us so well... collects every tear... and counts every hair on our heads... and even with our doubt... even with our imperfections... invites us in to the dance... until the end of love...