

Sermon, Christ Church Richmond
The Rev. Laurel Johnston, Program Officer for Stewardship
Easter Seven, May 16, 2010
Revelation: 22:12-21
John 17: 20-26

Are any of you familiar with the TV show *WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?*

Adapted from a British series, It is a show featuring well known celebrities and the journey they undertake in tracing their family roots as far back as they can go.

It is a fascinating show to watch... Sarah Jessica Parker discovers one of her ancestors was accused of witchcraft during the Salem witch trials. Brooks Shields traces her lineage on her Fathers side back to Louis the 14th.

And Filmmaker Spike learns that the first emancipated slave on his mother's side, a man named MAARS, secured more than 80 acres of land outside Atlanta, more than double the amount that the most fortunate were able to secure.

As an aside—for any of you Spike Lee fans, you may remember that the lead character in Spike Lee's first movie, *She's Gotta Have It* was named MAARS and he named his production studio 40 acres an a mule; choices the filmmaker made without any prior knowledge about his past.

While each of their journey's is unique they find that in discovering their ancestral roots they feel this new sense of connection-- they are connected to something much greater than themselves and have a deeper sense of who they are. In fact, the whole premise of the show is: *You don't really know who you are until you know where you came from.*

In today's Gospel, Jesus for the FINAL time gives an account of who he is and where he came from, tracing his lineage all the way back to the heart of God.

Jesus is the direct expression--the manifestation of God's love

Throughout John's Gospel Jesus spends his entire ministry revealing that in him, God has come to pitch a tent and has come to dwell among us.

And for all who to come to believe in Him they will share in divine life--- In the promise of life abundant.

It is Thursday Night, Jesus and the disciples are gathered in the upper room on the eve before his crucifixion. He has told them that where he is going, they cannot follow, but he will prepare a place for them and will send the Holy Spirit, the Great Comforter As a sign of his presence to be not only *WITH THEM, BUT IN THEM.*

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus will be more intimately and powerfully present with them

in this way then He ever was in his earthly presence.

Gathered in the upper room, Jesus turns his attention to the Father and begins a prayer of intercession.

He asks that the disciples know that the LOVE shared between The Father and Son is known *By them and in them.*

It is a prayer of intercession and invitation to plunge into the deep mystical union of divine life..

To abide in the love of God is to speak of a love, a tenacious, fierce, persistent love that won't let go.

Now this is a prayer for all who come to believe. It is a prayer for each and every generation

It is Jesus prayer for us today:

THE LOVE WITH WHICH YOU HAVE LOVED ME MAY BE IN THEM, AND I IN THEM.

This is Jesus' prayer for us For this gathered body here, today, right now.

Imagine, Jesus praying for us not to forget that it is the Spirit of Christ that lives inside each of us. And when each of us *yields* to this Spirit we come to know who we truly are.

To know where you are, You have to know where you came from.

Each of our histories, begins with the primordial story that we share in the Mystical union. The oneness. The mutual-indwelling of God's love, made known in Christ.

A 17th Century Mystic described this mutual indwelling as "God is the fire in me and I in Him the Shine. Are we not with each other most inwardly entwined?"

The invitation to shared life, given to us in our baptisms is both gift and response. It shapes both our identity and our choices.

As Program Officer for Stewardship much of my ministry is helping congregations understand stewardship is much more than an annual giving program.

But is indeed a process of conversion.

A conversion that comes from the understanding that The Risen Christ is not out there anymore *but is in here.*

This is one of the most challenging difficult shifts we can make as human beings.

When we begin to affirm our one-ness we can no longer keep things compartmentalized and separate.

As we yield to the Risen Christ in us, we cannot afford to keep our money lives separate from our faith lives they are one.

Today many of us spent the afternoon with Nathan Dungan, Founder of share, save, spend.

I'm a big fan of Nathan's for two reasons: The first is that he is helping the wider church break open conversations about money – a conversation that is long, long over due.

We don't do a very good job talking about money. It's still quite taboo. Somewhere along the lines we learned it wasn't polite or it made people uncomfortable or it's just to intimate. It's a private matter, thank you very much.

Essentially we have been engaged in a conspiracy of silence around money. And as long as this conspiracy of silence holds we will all continue to live in this false dichotomy drawing big dark lines between our spiritual lives and our money lives.

For those of you engaged in becoming trainers in helping the children, youth engage in conversations around money and faith, know that you are engaged in holy, sacred work and know that is the Spirit of the Risen Christ stirring inside of you, helping to bring wholeness that Jesus came to give us in the promise of abundant life.

The second reason I'm a big fan of Nathan's is that conversations about money serve as a conduit to reflect on the deeper questions of who we are and what really matters.

I've participated in a number of Nathan's Money Sanity workshops and I'm always struck by the AHA moments by the epiphany that comes when one discovers their *generosity genethat* being generous is essential to who they are.

In fact, that is how God has created us and hardwired us to be.

In our journey to discover who we are we find that we are at our best when we are giving and forgiving.

It is a quite a challenge to yield --- Make way in our heads and hearts for the Spirit of the Risen Christ to come through.

It's far too easy to succumb to a sense of spiritual amnesia, because the voices of our culture are clamoring so very very loud to tell us who we are and what to do with our money.

I'm convinced that here at Christ Church Richmond we are seeing the answer to Jesus' Prayer. To experience "one-ness" wholeness by engaging in conversations of money and faith.

Nathan begins and ends his presentation with the challenge: *What you do with your money can change the world*

And I would like to add what you do with your money can change you too.

To become the holy and living vessel for the Risen Christ to shine through.