

BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI
THE WORSHIP OF GOD • JUNE 16, 2019
“THE GOSPEL ON BROADWAY”

The Litany
Based on Psalm 8

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and stars that you have established,
O Lord our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth.
What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

The Scripture
John 16:2-15

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

The Message
Careful What You Say
Terry Overfelt

The Musical: *Into the Woods* – “Children Will Listen”

Ryan, thank you for that beautiful song. Coming from your heart on this Father’s Day, you bless us with both caution and fullness. Caution in the use of the word, careful, and fullness in the breaking down of the same word to be filled with care; care full! Thank you.

This is the first Sunday of our Summer Series: The Gospel on Broadway. Throughout these next weeks, we will consider the sacred Scriptures and the relation of them being revealed through the culture of Broadway musicals.

It seems fitting that Broadway Christian Church would play sacred host to this merger.

For as we look for the revealing of God in all created things, the amazing, inspired creativity of story, moral, and music would be fertile ground for holy enlightenment with the attention generating device of theatre.

Plus, through the next eight Sundays, we can all say we sang musicals on Broadway...put that on your resume.

One of my favorite musical styles is a waltz...1,2,3... The waltzing theology of Christianity as expressed on this Sunday is called Trinity Sunday. The waltz often opens our prayers. "In the name of the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." We pray: "Triune God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our waltzing hearts, be pleasing to you. Amen."

Big Love: The triune God is our perfect parent, love, light, and truth.

INTO THE WOODS is a story of growing up, parenting, childhood, accepting responsibility, wish fulfillment and its consequences, loving-yet embattled relationships of parents and children...and almost everything that goes wrong in the story is the result of parental failure. Whoa.

Stephen Sondheim, writer of the music, says it's real. He drew on his own experience when his father was uncomfortable with babies and his mother expressed regret of having children. Whoa again! But hang on, the "Once upon a time" is not a tragedy, but a cautionary tale to be careful.

Children are listening. Children are seeing. They may not obey, but they will listen. Other people's children, in fairytales or real life, put all of us on the shepherd's crook. Biology is only part of our family.

In this place, in church, children belong to the village. When we spoke the catechism with the kids, we accepted our responsibility to help to raise them in faith. We belong to one another; all of us. Larger yet, we affirm that just as we are, we all belong to God. The triune God. So, what are we saying about this threefold character, and are we *care full* for the listening of others by what we say and do? This is good for us to consider on Father's Day.

I. What is the Essence of God in this trinity?

When I was in college, I learned the word Jesus used for God, Abba, was a warmer, parent-like addressing of God; much more familiar than the formality that the culture and faith tradition of the Hebrews used. Jesus taught that God was approachable, forgiving, and loving, rather than distant, judgmental, and punishing. The truth of God was love revealed in all created things. The truth of God was goodness.

Like the disciples, I had to reshape some of my heritage of requirement and unworthiness. "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed."

One of my friends told me this story:

As a boy, he and his dad went to Saturday confession at the church together. This was a requirement if you were to take communion on Sunday. On the way home, after the confessions, his dad asked him to not do anything wrong the rest of the day. I thought this was so the boy stayed worthy of communion.

The story continued. The father said, don't do anything wrong, so that you don't make me mad and I say a bad word.

In confession and mea culpa, I became worthy again and again. There was beauty in the discipline yet there were also qualifiers and exclusivity. The tradition had requirements to reestablish my being in good graces with God, and it was even more joyful when I imagined Abba's open arms.

Religions have been born and divided on how to most revere God. None of us have gotten it all right. It is impossible for us to fully comprehend the nature of God. We need to say this in honoring other traditions. Someone else does not have to be wrong for us to be right.

17th Century philosopher, mathematician, and physicist, Blaise Pascal converted to Christianity after two Christian mystics cared for his sick father. He later had a vision he called a "night of fire," and wrote:

"Don't worry too much about what you believe; focus instead on your actions, on how you are living, and your convictions will follow."

He argued that, "While definitive proof of God's existence exceeds our grasp, this shouldn't surprise us. Whenever we face unanswerable questions, we either bet on the idea that God is real, or the idea that God is a fantasy. If God is real, there is a great deal to be gained in the believing and acting as if God is real. If God is a fantasy, there's little lost no matter what we do. So, it makes more sense to **wager** that God is real and to live our everyday lives practicing."

His idea recognizes that genuine faith doesn't involve proof or certainty, but rather a humble and courageous "betting our lives" on God.

- from *the theology of SALT*, June 2019

When we are open with our questions, and our understandings of God, “Children Will Listen.”

II. God with us.

Emmanuel is the second essence of God in Christ Jesus. Light of the world. God and Jesus are distinct and one. When God so loves the world that we were sent Jesus, God is willing to be born and dwell among us, even unto great sacrifice and death. God in Jesus made clear to us the love and one-anothering hopes of God.

Jesus crossed barriers to unite all in service to each other. His affirming and welcome embraces the belovedness of all created beings. Gender identity, ethnicity, culture, nation, abilities, challenges, changes, emotions, opinions, conditions, ancestry, wholeness, brokenness, judged and judging, we are all invited into this family.

God’s family is assumed in this place, as all. The righteous, the self-righteous and the unrighteous, the struggling and the strong...we all belong to God and each is unconditionally loved of God. Jesus’ teachings gave new light to the nature of God and proceeded to complete the law with the Spirit of God. It is good to worship where we profess God’s welcome, affirmation, and belonging to all. As we declare this, “Children Will Listen.”

III. The third essence added into the Trinity of God; inextricable and unique, is the Holy Spirit.

In today’s Scripture, Jesus is introducing the idea of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. “Sorrow has filled their hearts,” at the thought of losing their leader, as he is speaking again about his death and the coming of the Advocate.

The baptism classes made room for weeks of important lessons about what it means to be baptized into the body of Christ. When we talked about the Holy Spirit, we spoke of the voice of Christ being heard and recognized by Jesus’ disciples in their hearts, because they had known his voice in their lives!

The Holy Spirit has been with God’s people since creation...”In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the word was God (John 1).”

In the conception, birth, and life of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is evident and **for** the disciples, is about to be recognized as the inward dwelling of God in us.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send the Spirit and when Spirit comes, the world will be proven wrong...”

Wrong about sin; not as in breaking laws (moral or otherwise), but in terms of our choice to accept the teaching of Jesus and his Lordship in our lives and turn away from sin.

Wrong about the righteousness of Jesus; referring to his completing all God has sent him to do on the earth.

Wrong in judgment: Jesus knows the powers of evil that held the world captive will be destroyed.

The Holy Spirit is the Truth Whisperer...the Paraclete...which means God **for** and **with** you.

The presence of God that will constantly be at your side, teaching, giving you insights into the past and revelations of God and God's will. God within and among us by this power of the Holy Spirit for the building up of individuals and community.

Jesus could not always be with his disciples as flesh and blood, but as Spirit, they would have him with them always.

I asked the baptism class, who in their lives do they know is absolutely **for** them. They named parents, friends, God, some of you... Who do they trust to give them good advice, affirmation, encouragement, correction, redirection, and judgement? Who is it that we can trust completely with no agenda other than our capacities for goodness? This is who the Holy Spirit is for us!

Jesus goes on...

"I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now...When the Spirit of Truth comes you will be guided into all the truth that will be spoken from God. The Holy Spirit will take what is mine, and declare it to you..."

God is Love. Jesus brings light. The Holy Spirit emboldens truth. This threefold essence: love, light and truth is the most beautiful parenting that we can emulate in our **belonging** to the family of God. After last week's baptism, one parent asked her son if he was afraid to go under the water. When he answered "Yes," she asked how then did he do it? He said, "I knew the Holy Spirit was with me." "Children Will Listen."

The Benediction

We would like to let you know that you belong. . .

People on all parts of the continuum of gender identity and expression, including those who are gay, bisexual, heterosexual, transgender, cisgender, queer folks, the sexually active, the celibate, and everyone for whom those labels don't apply. We say, "You belong."

People of African descent, of Asian descent, of European descent, of First Nations descent in this land and abroad, and people of mixed and multiple descents and of all the languages spoken here. We say, "You belong."

Bodies with all abilities and challenges. Those living with any chronic medical condition, visible or invisible, mental, or physical. We say, "You belong."

People who identify as activists and those who don't. Mystics, believers, seekers of all kinds. People of all ages. Those who support you to be here. We say, "You belong."

Your emotions: joy, fear, grief, contentment, disappointment, surprise, and all else that flows through you. We say, "You belong."

Your families, genetic and otherwise. Those dear to us who have died. Our ancestors and the future ones. The ancestors who lived in this land, in this place, where these buildings are now . . . we honor you through this work that we are undertaking. We say, "You belong."

People who feel broken, lost, struggling; who suffer from self-doubt and self-judgment. We say, "You belong."

All beings that inhabit this earth, human or otherwise: the two-legged, the four-legged, winged and finned, those that walk, fly, and crawl, above the ground and below, in air and water. We say, "You belong."

Adapted from "Diversity Welcome," Training for Change