

Good Friday

It occurs to me that we only talk about the Trinity once a year, the Sunday after Pentecost.

And yet, tonight seems to be a night that begs us to ruminate for a while about the Holy Trinity.

It is the Rubrick's cube of our faith: one God... yet three persons... yet one God.

What is the sound of one hand clapping?

It's tonight though that may get us a glimpse of this truth, and it's tonight we can perhaps move away from old ways of thinking about God, and move a little closer toward what Jesus actually means in our lives, in the life of the world.

Old time religion says that people sinned so God the Father sends God the Son to die for us, to die in our place, so that God's justified anger at us can be appeased.

That's taking the idea of one God and splitting God in two — and that's a heresy, meaning a teaching that while it has some snippets of truth, is mostly wrong, and is dangerous because it leads us to places we are not intended to go.

Old time religion turns tonight into a pious, spiritualized, private affair that has no real impact at all on the world or on our Monday through Saturday lives.

If God sends Jesus to die for us, we are just spectators in a drama that doesn't actually ask anything of us, (except maybe to say thank you and to try hard not to think too much about what kind of Father sends an innocent to die such a grisly death)....

But if we take the Trinity seriously, then it cannot be an irate Father sending a willing Son to that grisly death – it means that God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in ways we cannot understand, endures the violent death that we inflict this night.

At our hands, God surrenders to our insistence that "might makes right," to our insistence that the highest good is to protect ourselves and those we love from the threats of others, to our insistence that our safety is the greatest good: and in that surrender, God rejects our ways by refusing to exercise power against us who kill Jesus, by refusing to protect Jesus from our wrath, by purposefully embracing the risk and rejecting safety, by dying rather than killing.

And God does all of this at a cost to God that is incalculable.

Can it be that the very fabric of God is torn, like the curtain at the temple?

If this is true, then what does tonight mean in our lives, in the life of the world?

Perhaps it means this....

God is that in which everything exists; and God's most ardent desire is for us to live in harmony with God's ways, not our ways – not in some heavenly place after we die, but now, today, on this good earth.

That is God's call to us, the great call for which God surrenders so much.

And so, if we follow Jesus, and not merely worship him, it means we too, as individuals and as a nation, will reject the notion that "might makes right;" that we will reject the siren call of self-protection, that we will reject those efforts to ensure our safety by killing or ostracizing others, even those who wish us harm.

Now most folks will say that is completely nuts!

Probably many here are thinking exactly that too, especially when we are all still shocked by the mass shooting in New Zealand and the never ending slaughter in Yemen and the hideous church burnings in Louisiana.

Especially as politicians ramp up jingoistic rhetoric against the stranger, the outsider, the other.

And yet, this is the place where the rubber meets the road.

Tonight, of all nights, the question put to each of us is the crucial question:

What does the death of Jesus mean to our actual life, to our actual world?

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