

I'm just Sayin'

Matthew 28.16-20

Trinity Sunday

June 19, 2011

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Today is Trinity Sunday; that one day a year we struggle to make sense of the notion of God we have inherited in our faith; God as Three-in-One and One-in-Three; God as always unified yet never confused. Say what? What in the world could these expressions mean? We might find it easier to relate to the statement affirmed in the anthem we just heard performed so well by the Kansas City Men's Ensemble, "My Lord is real, I can feel it in my soul." In fact, I suggest this refrain might be a better description of God than the abstract and puzzling notions cited above.

I say this because the beliefs we affirm are intended, above all else, to give some meaningful expression of our *experience* of God. To say that God is Three-in-One is to say that no aspect of our experience is beyond the presence and touch of God. "My Lord is real, I can feel it in my soul." To say that God is always unified yet never confused is to say that there is nowhere we can go; no situation in which we can find ourselves that eludes God's presence. We need a Creator. We need someone to hold the stars in their course and coax the flowers to bloom. And God is there. We need a Redeemer to bring wholeness to our lives, to help us overcome addictions, and to find meaning and compassion in our personal lives. And God is there. We need comfort. We need courage in times of crisis or loss. And God is there. In all instances, in all situations, in all places "My Lord is real, I can feel it in my soul."

*"Bo" James R. Crowe
Overland Park Christian Church*

The significance of our beliefs, including our belief about God, does not lie in their eloquence, complexity, or profundity, but rather in their ability to give some expression to our lived experience of God. Thus, if the expression Three-in-One and One-in-Three doesn't strike a chord deep within you, if it doesn't make your soul sing, if it doesn't ring true to some sense of your experience; try this one, "My Lord is real, I can feel it in my soul." It's as wonderful an expression of Trinity as I can think of.

I find it interesting that according to the calendar of the church year, we celebrate the Ascension of Jesus, Pentecost, and Trinity within a space of three weeks. We stand on the mountain with the disciples, confused by the abrupt disappearance of the resurrected Lord; we celebrate the gift of Spirit that enlivens and empowers the community we call church; and one week later we are expected to have all our ducks in a row and be ready to affirm and understand the Triune God. The Church had four hundred years to arrive at this conclusion. I'm just sayin'... it's not that easy. The Church suffered crisis, controversy, and outbreaks of violence before arriving at the formula Three-in-One and One-in-Three. The Church contended with Docetism and Gnosticism... and more. They considered hypostatic unions and explored the possibility that the Son is homoousios with the Father... and more. Finally, in the fifth century and the last ecumenical council, the Church pronounced its doctrine of Trinity.

The church had four hundred years to squabble about God, but I'm still not sure they got it right. I don't think you can get that mystery right. At some point you have to let your heart sing, you have to give expression to the meaning you find in your experience of God as creator, redeemer, and companion. At some point you have to sing, "My Lord is real, I can feel it in my soul."