

All the Colors of God

Luke 2.41-52 (The Message)

Children's Sabbath

October 23, 2011

I watched her go uncelebrated into the second grade, a colorless child, gray among the orange and yellow, attached too much to corners and to other people's sunshine. She colors the rainbow brown and leaves balloons unopened in their packages. Oh, who will touch this colorless child? Who will plant alleluias in her heart and send her dancing into all the colors of God? Or will she be left like an unwrapped package on the kitchen table— too dull for anyone to take the trouble? Does God think we're her keeper?

- Ann Weems (adapted for worship)

Every year Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up as they always did for the Feast. When it was over and they left for home, the child Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents didn't know it. Thinking he was somewhere in the company of pilgrims, they journeyed for a whole day and then began looking for him among relatives and neighbors. When they didn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for him. The next day they found him in the Temple seated among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. The teachers were all quite taken with him, impressed with the sharpness of his answers. But his parents were not impressed; they were upset and hurt. His mother said, "Young man, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you." He said, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?" But they had no idea what he was talking about. So he went back to Nazareth with them, and lived obediently with them. His mother held these things dearly, deep within herself. And Jesus matured, growing up in both body and spirit, blessed by both God and people.

The Voice of the Muse

Wisdom often appears in the strangest places. In a novel I'm currently reading, for example, a middle aged hobo nicknamed Craw functions as a muse or intenerate philosopher, the voice in which wisdom becomes incarnate. Craw is sensitive to life's intimacies and vagaries, a fact confirmed time and again by his pronouncements. Craw maintains, for example, that all of human-kind is absolutely equal; men, women, children, yellow, black, young or old; don't make no never

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

mind. Yet we are all called upon to play roles in life. Sometimes we choose the role; sometimes the role is thrust upon us. But's that's not the problem. The problem with our roleplaying according to Craw is that we take our favorite roles too seriously and refuse to relinquish them. That or we become so ensconced in them that we can't escape.

That's the case, for example, with the colorless children mentioned in today's worship heading. They cannot escape their role. The role of oppressed child - neglected, ignored, or abused - is certainly not a role they've chosen for themselves. It's a role that has been thrust upon them, and they can't find their way out of it on their own. If they are to embrace all the colors of God – all the beauty and goodness of life – they will need some help somewhere along the way.

Again, take the role of adult. Many if not most of us have decided that being an adult means giving up childish ways, and we condemn ourselves to a role that is every bit as colorless as that of the colorless child. We lose all sense of spontaneity. We lose all sense of joy and plain ol' wonder at life. We lose a sense of openness, acceptance, and a hunger to explore and experience life to the fullest. We lose some of the wonderfully spontaneous spiritual qualities of childhood and in consequence lose our color.

According to Craw, however, reality is contrary to appearances, and we do not have to remain stuck in roles. We can recognize that our lives are colorless and seek to regain in faith some of those wonderful attributes of a childlike spirituality. We can't become children again and we certainly shouldn't be childish, but we can regain a childlike sense of spirituality that is open and joyful. I mention this today – Children's Sabbath – because if we don't regain the joy and color of faith, there won't be anyone to reach out to the colorless children that are all around us, and who depend on us to send them, as Ann Weems says, dancing into all the colors of God.

I invite you to join me this morning in a litany of commitment. A commitment to rise beyond the role of colorless Christian and become Christians who celebrate life and faith, and reach out to the colorless children in our world who need us so very much. Would you please join me in this act of consecration?

Litany of Commitment for Children's Sabbath

Who will touch the colorless children, and work to see that every child has opportunities to grow and learn, explore and discover all the colors of God?

We will, with the grace of God.

Who will believe, and act on the belief, that all children can succeed and perform at high levels?

We will, with the grace of God.

Who will work to support children, parents, guardians, teachers, and all those charged with care of our children?

We will, with the grace of God.

Who will support families in times of crisis so the needs of the children will not be neglected?

We will, with the grace of God.

Who will work to involve our whole community—health care providers, police, social service agencies, neighborhood groups, voluntary organizations, and other congregations—to see that our children get what they need to learn and succeed in school and beyond?

We will, with the grace of God.

We are called to covenant with God and with one another. God will be with us as we help all children, especially the colorless children, to learn, succeed, and fulfill their God given potential.

Prayer

O God, help us to recover hope ...for our children's sake. Help us to recover courage ...for our children's sake. Help us to recover discipline ...for our children's sake. Help us to recover our ability to work together ...for our children's sake. Help us to recover compassion ...for our children's sake. Help us to recover our faith in you... for our children's sake. Amen.