



A sermon preached by E. Scott Winnette
August 23, 2020
Holy Unity
John 17;1-11 and Psalm 133

We heard today the prayer Jesus offered moments before his Jerusalem capture. He celebrates how an abundance of glory would rain down upon the host of believers blessing them with Holy unity. This glory shows how Creation and God, God and Jesus, Humanity and Jesus, everything and everywhere, everywhen and everything, everyone and everything – glory is how all-all-all things and thoughts, emotions and powers are bound together. All the world is one.

We might define the glory Jesus speaks of with analogs like: love, or beauty, or cooperation, fulsomeness, transcendence within materialness. Glory is incarnations' square dancing, and slow dancing, and jitterbug dancing, mambo, jive and boogie-woogie dancing – sometimes with ordered beauty and sometimes with chaos' sweaty surprising sweetness. Jesus calls down a spiritual synergy, a fleshly symbiosis, a twirling incarnational re-connection.

Trappist Monk Thomas Merton was in Asia with Buddhist leaders when he spoke of our hunger to remember an “older unity.” He references an original unity, an all-ready-oneness that we have forgotten.¹ Ponder with me a moment the magic of unity, the together magic you remember – the oneness of loving eyes, the oneness touch of another, the oneness vastness of a starry night, and warm breezes caressing butterfly, pansy petal, feline whiskers and bared sun-burned shoulders as one.

Presbyterian Kathleen Norris wrote in her book *Amazing Grace*, “From the outside, church congregations can look like remarkably contentious places, full of hypocrites who talk about love while fighting each other tooth and nail. This is the reason many people give for avoiding them. On the inside, however, it is a different matter, a matter of struggling to maintain unity as “the body of Christ” given the fact that we have precious little uniformity. I have only to look at the congregation I know best, the one I belong to. We are not individuals who have come together because we are like-minded. That is not a church, but a political party. We are like most healthy churches, I think, in that we can do pretty well when it comes to loving and serving God, each other, and the world; but God help us if we have to agree about things! I could test our “uniformity” by suggesting a major remodeling of the sanctuary, or worse, that Holy of Holies — the church kitchen... The church is like the Incarnation itself,

¹ Within “Stories from Iona”, May 2, 2014 John Phillip Newell remembers Thomas Merton.

*a shaky proposition. It's a human institution, full of ordinary people, sinners like me, who do and say cruel things. But it is also a divinely inspired institution, full of good purpose, which partakes of a unity far greater than the sum of its parts... That is why it's called the body of Christ."*²

Every day New Vision and Rockville United churches are unified in ministry, drawn together in Holy Unity. Today, we benefit from the internet's gift of seeing each other. God's patterns bind together all good-mission-joy-minded peoples as we seek to re-create the world as one of justice, respect and joy for all.

I am reminded of Carrie Newcomer's song, Everything is Everywhere.

*Would it be so wrong, could it be that bad,
To hope for a little more happy than sad?
This is more that I can hold or bare,
Cause everything is everywhere.*

*There is still so much work to do,
Armloads of sorrow yes, this is true,
But I take heart when I despair,
Miracles are everywhere*

*I like sweet salt, soda lime,
I love the patterns of flowers and vines,
From the train I watch the new moon rise,
The reflection of my grateful eyes.*

*Would it be so wrong, could it be that bad,
To hope for a little more happy than sad?
This is more that I can hold or bare,
Cause everything is everywhere.*

Philippians 2 also envisages oneness. *"Make my joy complete, be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus."*

Jesus attracted crowds of people luring them to remember a forgotten synchronized action, their oneness. How do we respond to the violence and injustice in our world; we respond with the power of Holy unity. With the chorus of our voices, we sing of love, we sing of justice, and we sing in solidarity with those who do the things we would if we could.

In the 1980s Blues musician Daryl Davis met a member of the Ku Klux Klan. Davis was the only black man in a country band. They were playing a gig at an all-white venue in Frederick, Maryland. After their set, a white man approached Davis to compliment his piano

² Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), p. 272

skills, saying he'd never heard a black pianist play like Jerry Lee Lewis. "Who do you think taught Jerry Lee Lewis to play that way?" Davis replied. They hit it off. Soon it was discovered the white man was a member of the KKK. Nonetheless, or by Holy unity they became friends. Davis befriended many racists and in time many of them left the KKK. Davis said, "People must stop focusing on the symptoms of hate, that's like putting a Band-Aid on cancer,..." "We've got to treat it down to the bone, which is ignorance. The cure for ignorance is education. You fix the ignorance, there's nothing to fear. If there's nothing to fear, there's nothing to hate. If there's nothing to hate, there's nothing or no one to destroy." The Rev. Martin Luther King said similarly, "Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that." In our unity we teach love, we teach Holy morality, which is respect for all.

As Kathleen Norris said, "We are not individuals who have come together because we are like-minded. That is not a church, but a political party. We are like most healthy churches, I think, in that we can do pretty well when it comes to loving and serving God, each other, and the world..." It's a strength that people and parties view things differently. Yet we should dance together in our diversity and be united together calling one another away from evil. Today that means we unite in renouncing leaders who trade in the unacceptable, we teach justice. We renounce leaders who are guilty of ongoing, unrepentant racism, we teach all humans are made in the beautiful image of God. We renounce leaders who lie repeatedly; we teach honesty and integrity. We renounce leaders who bully and threaten, we teach love.

We synchronize our bodies, our minds, our spirits in God's love, God's glory, God's beauty. Listen to words of Peter Mayer.

*You can say that you stand apart
Put a fence around your yard
You can build a tall rampart and guard it with a gun
You can dig yourself a moat
Burn the bridge and burn the boat
It won't matter that much, you know
Because all the world is one, all the world is one*

Let us pray. *Where there is hatred, let us sow love. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. O Divine Teacher, grant that we may not so much seek to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love. Amen.*