

Colossians 1:15-28

A Dance

Dance has been one of my greatest joys. You know that line, “Dance like know one is watching”? Well, some days I am in my house with the tunes cranked up and I dance knowing that no one is watching. My love of dance started in grade school when we were first introduced to it in our phys. ed. class. That began my dream of being a ballroom dancer. Something that never did happen, but I did go on to enjoy many community dances, (now that is dating myself), as well as being part of a Ukrainian Dance troop. In my small community in Northern Alberta the only dance classes available at that time were Ukrainian, so this little Dutch girl headed off to that, as did our children, and myself again as an adult.

Dance taught me a lot about how to move in sync with multiple other people participating. How to move across a dance floor with a partner or create patterns within a group. It was wonderful to watch but even more meaningful to be a participant in the dances. Of course, dance is deeply intertwined with music, the flow, the rhythm, tempo, beat, and sound. It evokes emotions and movement.

The scripture reading from Colossians opens with music...a hymn...but it is the dance of the relationship between God, the church, and individuals, alluded to in the scripture that brings about an even richer meaning.

The hymn speaks about God and the dance that happens between God the Father and Jesus the Son, how all things were created in and through God as Creator. The “he” in this hymn is Jesus. Listen again to the words of how deeply embedded Jesus was in the work of creation.

[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, ¹⁶ for in [Jesus] all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through [Jesus] and for [Jesus]. ¹⁷ [Jesus] himself is before all things, and in [Jesus] all things hold together. ¹⁸ [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church; [Jesus] is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that [Jesus] might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” ¹ (Colossians 1: 15-29).

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When read this way, you see the depth of Jesus' involvement in creation. When we only hear the pronouns, it takes away the power of the statement. Jesus was intimately and always involved in how God has been at work. And then to continue, one can see just how God and Jesus together worked to bring people and God together.

“...and through [Jesus] God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of [Jesus]’ cross.

²¹ And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² [Jesus] has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before [God]”

From the start, the beginning of creation, Jesus was in on the work of God in the world and then in the work of reconciling the world to God. This work was necessary because we got things messed up. The ancient story of Adam and Eve points to the fact that when the world was created there was no sin. This origin story does not necessarily exactly tell of how things went awry, but it was a story used by ancients to explain how messed up things got and continue to be. We were not created to be at odds with one another but rather to live in harmony.

Now, it is not hard to look around us and see just how far we are from what God had intended for us. Recently, I ended up down a rabbit hole in which I found news reports talking about white supremacy groups and how that is on the rise in Canada and around the world. We look at the hate, the desire for domination, and think, how can we ever come to the place that God intended? Those words from the Lord's prayer so hard to imagine, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

And the hope is that we can be part of how the kingdom of God comes, even in part, to the earth now so that a peaceable kingdom where people care for each other can become a reality. And this is where the next part of the scripture leads us...

“²² [Jesus] has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present [us] holy and blameless and irreproachable before [God], ²³ provided that [we] continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that [we] heard”

Jesus' death and resurrection gives us hope. You may recall that I gave a definition of hope last week, I present it again,

Hope: The promise of a future worth the trouble it takes to get out of bed in the morning.

Intimately related to Faith and Love, and quite unlike fear, dread, and sarcasm, hope is one of those things that we human beings cannot generate from within. Hope starts to grow inside of us when a promise is spoken to us from the

outside. Theologically, this means hope is our response to the gospel, and it means hope has the same invigorating and optimism-producing properties as a great cup of coffee on a cold, dark morning. ... the effects of gospel-induced hope are [long] lasting (we are promised eternal life), free (we don't have to pay for hope), and of some benefit to our neighbor (because we have hope we also have love for the neighbor).²

The apostle Paul is writing with hope for this community of faith that is facing struggle, particularly that of being inundated with people coming and teaching them things that Paul believes will ultimately take them away from being the followers of Christ as was intended. Paul has never met these people at Colossae but he has heard that they are being presented with rules and regulations, suggested or maybe even imposed, on the people in the congregation that go beyond what Jesus' death and resurrection promise as all that is needed.

It is because Paul has never met them that he adds to the letter his own interest in the Colossians, his work for the gospel of Christ and finally what is the hope of glory. He ends with a tone that is both kind and encouraging...

²⁴ I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ²⁵ I became [the church's] minister according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

The mystery is no longer a mystery. In Christ the fullness of God has been revealed and each of us has access to this.

I do want to add one more thought to this. For a long time I did not know what to make of Paul's statement that he (Paul) was completing what was lacking in Christ's afflictions as I knew, as Paul also taught in Colossians and elsewhere in scripture, that Christ is sufficient and has done for all what was needed. So, what did Paul mean by this? Simply that we carry on the work of reconciling the world to God through Jesus and the church.

Throughout this passage, what may not be clear, is that there is movement, like a dance, between God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and creation, of which we are joined. God uses people to continue the work of God in the world, where it is given to us, as

² Jacobson, Rolf A., Editor. *Crazy Talk: A Not-So-Stuffy Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Augsburg Books. Minneapolis. 2008. P 88.

individuals and as the church, to be a part of the reconciling work of God. That work is like a dance, there is choreography, music, rhythms, beats, emotions.

Sometimes we trip up, but the hope is that we learn to move together in bringing healing and hope to a broken and disrupted world in ways that reconcile people...again as individuals and as community...reconcile people to God. God's will being that all people should experience life and life that is abundant in goodness, kindness, justice, grace, forgiveness, and love.

The church becomes like a space between creation and God, where we learn to dance together and with God. Where others feel invited to dance, to learn the steps that respond to the hurt in the world, restores people to God and to wholeness in God in community. And then we rejoice...celebrate...that we have learned how to dance together with God. We share the mystery of God's love for everyone, as shown through the person of Jesus, who has always danced with God, right from the beginning and was in on creation.

Because Jesus has been there from the start and has also lived among us, returning then to God and now reigns with God we can trust and deeply know that God understands what we face each day, and in that, calls us to continue the work of reconciling the world to God and us with each other through Christ.

It sounds theologically complex and all over the place, but it is so basic. We are called to love and be loved. To work in community, to continue to grow in understanding of God's love and grace, and to rejoice together as we are day by day restored and renewed, while witnessing to others through our words and actions the God of love.

Imagining our dance with God we move in sync with multiple other people participating. Learning to move across a dance floor of life with partners or creating patterns within a group, knowing it is deeply meaningful to be a participant in the dance. We remember that this is a dance with God, intertwined with the music, the flow, the rhythm, tempo, beat, and sound of the Spirit. Thanks be to God that we are invited to dance.