

Second Sunday in Lent February 17

Readings: Genesis 12:1-8; Psalm 33:12-22; Romans 4:1-17; John 3:1-17

Gene has been doing a special study of John's Gospel, so Gene is very aware of --- Say it, Gene --- "Johanine Christos Mythos". What was the Homily about? We can all say Johanine Christos Mythos. All of us know what this is; we just don't use the words.

John tells a story about Nicodemus and Jesus. It is a wonderful story of the literalist meeting the living presence of God. Yet the story is the background for the Christos Mythos. John's theology, his myth of Christ, uses familiar words – 'God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life' – John 3:16.

For God sent the son not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him.

The creative life-giving spirit, the reality of compassion and justice comes as a gift to all of us. It is Grace. It's like becoming a different person with new vision. When we open our hearts, when we no longer live for ourselves alone; there is Christmas within.

This reality is eternal life. Theologians and Bible commentaries refer to everlasting life and eternal life as participation in God's life. Everlasting and eternal life is now. We participate. We are the body, the presence of God, the presence of compassion and justice. 'Now is the acceptable time', the Psalmist says. Everlasting and eternal describe the quality, the way of life. We grow closer to participation in God's life and our life continues to diminish.

John had no conception of some eternal realm where we are with all the dead. If they have been good, at death we are one with compassion and mercy, we continue to be one with the eternal presence of God. I am not eternal. God is.

In verse 17, we hear our call. People participating in God do not condemn; they seek to transform with the power of compassion and justice. Hear again – the Johanine Christos Mythos. We have received the presence of God. We have become the living presence of God. We are co-creator of the Kingdom. The rule of God --- we practice compassion and justice and mercy.

This is not the creator mythos. It is our story of meaning as well.

The ultimate meaning of life is to love mercy, do justice and walk humbly with thy God.

The myth, the story of the real meaning of life, our purpose for being is compassion and justice; our ministry is no less than being transformed and working for the redemption,

the transformation of all powers and principalities that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.

We do this all the time. We are always opening our hearts to God's grace. We join with others to help folks get through the day. We use financial, political, intellectual and personal power to heal, to clothe, to feed, to free and to die and live with hope.

We are helping as we bring seven items of food each week for our Loaves and Fishes pantry.

We help as we continue to oversee the management of St. Andrew's Homes with its 34 apartments.

We help in our pastoral care with each other in so many meaningful and often quiet ways.

Everyone here is involved in ministry outside these walls --- in your work and volunteering and in giving of your time and talent in so many ways.

St. Andrew's passes on the hope for eternal life, the hope for God's eternal presence working God's purpose out.

As you open the Millennium Development Goals brochure into a trifold, we can be proud of what our Episcopal Church does in the world to help protect the creatures of God.

As you completely open the brochure, please note the bottom right paragraph. How much can we raise for mosquito nets? Can we join with other congregations in Charlotte and participate in the eternal life of God by being a part of the "nets for life" movement? We can help save the lives of children and pregnant women.

We will give some money to our own audited and trusted Episcopal Fund. We can put a check made out to St. Andrews with a memo note for ERD, leave our donations on Sundays, and Easter morning, we will report the amount of the nest egg we will send to the ERD for Nets for Life. Erwin and I will place \$20 in the plate today with the plan to donate until Easter. I hope you will join us.

As we receive communion today, when we share the bread and wine, we will say "the Body of Christ, the bread of Eternal Life". We gather to celebrate the Grace that leads us in participation of God's life --- the life of compassion and mercy and justice --- that never dies.

Amen.

Rev. Will Hinson
February 17, 2008