

“He said, ‘The Father and I are one’”

John 10:22-30

4th Sunday of Easter

April 29, 2007

Brentwood First Presbyterian

Mike Magee

Scene 1 The religious leaders and Jesus are on a different page

Have you ever felt like you were having a conversation but somehow you and the other person just were not on the same page. And as a result, both you and the other person’s blood boiled, and this just furthered the poor communication?

There is the story of the family traveling up a series of switchbacks on the side of a mountain, such that they could not see what was just around the next turn. All of a sudden, someone comes at them swerving wildly into their lane, barreling down upon them and almost hitting them. The driver in the other car rolls the window down and yells to the family just one word, “Pigs!” The family is startled at his rudeness. Until they go around the turn, and are stopped by a herd of pigs filling up the road, almost hitting them. I have decided that most arguments and hostilities are due to miscommunication and prejudging before you have all the facts.

The religious leaders of his day encircle Jesus like a pack of dogs around their prey. Can you hear their snap and see their snarl? They ask, “How long are you going to irritate us?” They say, “If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly. Tell us straight out.” But when they ask if Jesus is the Messiah, what are they really asking?

The religious leaders of his day had this conversation with Jesus 2000 years ago. So to understand what they meant by the label of Messiah, we have to digress slightly into what is for us ancient history, but for them was history only 200 years old.

The Jews in Jesus time felt the Jerusalem Temple was the dwelling place of the God of the Jews, and 200 years earlier, the Greeks desecrated it by placing in it an idol to Zeus. The Festival of Dedication to which the text refers is Hanukkah. Hanukkah celebrates when the Jews defeated the Greeks. Judas Maccabeus was the powerful army leader who overthrew the oppression of the Greeks 200 years before. 200 years before the religious leaders met Jesus on the porch of the Jewish house of God. Fitting location for the discussion to follow. The Jewish word Messiah means deliverer, the one who delivers. The religious leaders of his day want to know if Jesus is the Jewish army leader of their day who is going to overthrow Roman oppression by force. Who is going to deliver them from the hands of oppression using physical force, like Judas Maccabeus 200 years before.

But the religious leaders are confused. Jesus is a different kind of Messiah. A Messiah who does not need swords and spears to overcome oppression. Jesus and the religious leaders of his day are not on the same page. They are not communicating. Jesus is the Messiah, but not the kind for which they are looking.

Scene 2 Jesus is sent from the heart of God

Jesus and our creating God are one. They are of one heart and soul. But what does this mean? The mother of an eleven year old Boy Scout does everything she can to help her son advance in rank. The scoutmaster of the troop tells the boys it is time to pick up trash on their adopt a mile in front of the church where they meet. It is a service project the troop does quarterly. They pick up trash along the mile in front of the church where they meet. She gets out there in the heat of the day and picks up trash with her son. She is not her son. But she and her son are of one mind and soul, picking up trash.

The religious leaders of his day ask Jesus if he is the Messiah. Jesus answers, "The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me." He says, "They bear witness to me." He says, "Actions speak louder than words." He says, "The Father and I are one." He says, "I and my Father are one." But the Greek here, unlike English, uses a neuter suffix for the word one. If Jesus had said he and God the Father were identical in every way, the word one would have been masculine. But it is neuter. The only noun that is neuter in this paragraph of scripture is the word for works, *εργα*. And the Greek word *εργα* is best translated "works," not "miracles" as the NIV translates it. All his works, which include his miracles. But because the word one refers back to the word works, Jesus is not saying that he and God the creating Father are identical in every way, but that he and God the Father are of one Spirit. The two are of one mind. Jesus is saying, "I and the Father are one heart and soul." Jesus is sent from the heart of God.

But the religious leaders still do not get it.

Scene 3 Through Jesus, we are the temple of God

With our words we can create or destroy, and with our actions we can build fences or repair bridges.

Yes, with our words, we can create or destroy. I became a baseball coach 15 years ago because I overheard one of my children's coaches criticizing his team. Berating them for how they played. They had won the game, but only by 5 runs over the worst team in the league. The coach had dreams of his team winning by 10 or 20 runs. They had only won by 5. So the coach told them that in his mind they had lost. How sad! This is the same coach who berated the outfielder for dropping the pop fly when he could have said, "Nice try!" Who berated the worst batter on the team for striking out again, when he could have said, "I am glad you

went down swinging!” With our words you and I possess the power to create or destroy.

With our actions we can build fences or repair bridges. All of us from time to time engage in an emotional argument with someone we love. We have an argument with a family member or a friend, but then we have a choice. We can part company or go to bed mad. Or we can hug or do a knuckle sandwich. By merely a touch, our actions can reconcile verbal conflict. Our actions can build fences or repair bridges.

Just as Hanukkah celebrates the defeat of the Greeks and replacement of a secular God with the one true God, so Jesus, during this celebration, talks about who is supposed to be in the Temples of our bodies. What is it that God wants to be in our hearts. In verse 38 Jesus says, “The Father is in me and I am in the Father.” “The Father is in me and I in him.” Jesus is sent from the heart of the one true God of the Jews. In today’s scripture, Jesus tells us he and our creating Father are united in *εργα*, in works. He tells us the *εργα*, the works, the deeds, which Jesus himself does are the deeds of the Father. God the Father, who with a word, creates the heavens and the earth. Jesus is sent from the heart of God, and from the beginning, is united in deeds with the Father creator.

And you and I are Baptized into Jesus. Through listening to the Word and taking the Lord’s Supper, Jesus is in us and we are in Jesus. And through Jesus, God the Father is also in us and we in him. Through Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus invites us to the table, our bodies become the temples of the one true God. The one God. Not Zeus. Not the God of our culture. Not our addictions. Not money. Not our jobs. Not the internet. Not the Titans. Not even our children. We are created by God our heavenly Father not to be temples of these other things. But to be the temple of the one true God.

Conclusion

Switchbacks, picking up trash, baseball, and going down swinging.

Jesus is sent from the heart of God. We know this because in today’s scripture he says so. In Baptism, the Word, and the Lord’s Supper, we ourselves receive Jesus, and with Jesus, the heart of God. The power to lovingly create with our words, the joy of reconciliation, and the fellowship and community with God and each other. God chooses humankind to usher in God’s commonwealth. To usher it in with words and actions. What an honor to be called to create with words, to be called to reconcile and rescue others with our actions. To be inspired by God to usher in God’s commonwealth. To be the temple of our creating, reconciling, and inspiring God. Glory be to God, Hallelujah, and the people say, AMEN!