

Sermon

May 22, 2016 | Trinity Sunday | Lydia Gajdel

When I graduated from college, I moved out to Philadelphia to work for a social service organization. Part of my job was community outreach in impoverished North Philly. Enter King (who continuously assured me he was no relation to Prince). King was in our office twice a week. Thursdays for his weekly appointment with his case manager. Mondays to drop off my calendar of events that he would create. As a lifelong Philadelphian, King knew everyone and everything that was happening in his small slice of North Philly and felt it was his duty to help the organization that I worked for reach as many people as possible. He knew every neighborhood meeting, block party, and community event that I needed to be at and every week placed a list on my desk. At the beginning of this, I thought he was crazy. By the end, I knew he understood something that I did not. And every week when I thanked him for my calendar, his reply was the same, "That's what I was made for, baby girl."

That's what I was made for.

I couldn't help but think about King as I prepared to preach on this Trinity Sunday. Because today we get to talk about what we are made for. On this Trinity Sunday we are given the opportunity to think deeply about the way that we approach our God in whose image we were created. Our God is a God of relationship. I mean really, flip through your bulletin and count how many times we name God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit during our liturgy. It's a lot. And it's intentional. We seal our rituals from baptism to burial in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because it says something about what we think about God and what we think about ourselves. We are people who have been claimed by the God of the Trinity. Our story is interwoven with the experience of God as three in one, as communal at God's very essence.

I once had someone draw me a picture of the trinity for a class that I was taking. Three giant stick figures on a chalk board. Circles vigorously drawn around them to exemplify

motion and connectivity. It was this motion of the whole that reached out and brought into the relationship of the three a tiny stick figure that had been drawn at the bottom of the board. Theological implications of drawing God as a stick figure aside, this image makes sense to me. The motion of the love of God flowing as the essence of who God is. Reaching out to bring us in.

The Trinity is not about three separate entities somehow mysteriously connected, working different and individuated tasks in our lives. The Trinity is about relationship. It's about being connected, drawn in. It's about being in love. And it is that love of God that reaches out and brings each of us into communion with God. It is a natural and essential part of who God is in Godself. Three persons in one being, exemplifying the perfection of relationship. A relationship in whose image we were created. Belief in the Trinity means that we profess faith in a God whose very essence is communal and understand that we are implicated in that. We are part of that relationship and it is part of us.

But we are human, with all of the brokenness that comes with it. We might not be able to stop God from loving us, but we sure don't seem to be embracing that love sometimes. In fact, we actively resist it. We are blind to it. We act apart from it. Every day we are given opportunities to engage in the love of God through our engagement with each other, even in the smallest of ways. And every day we stumble, not recognizing the presence of God in the teenager checking us out at the grocery store or the person taking up more than their fair share of the seat on the el. As the love of God reaches out to us in relationship, we put in our headphones and look the other way.

In a world that is always running forward, complicated and sometimes overwhelming, I think the trick for us is in the noticing. The trick is in paying attention in a way that makes us able to see God reaching out to be in relationship with us,

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even in the midst of the chaotic and the mundane. It is in the paying attention to where we are brought into relationship with God that we are able to see sparks of who we were created to be and given the tools to live into that reality.

When I was a sophomore in college, I came to the conclusion that I should probably learn how to pray. I had grown up in a church with the pre-written prayers of my forefathers that had been handed down throughout the centuries and that was how I knew how to address God. But I felt like it was time to come to God with my own words, so I joined a Christian Life Community on campus, sort of like our small groups that we do here. It was there that I learned to pray by paying attention. We began every meeting by praying the examen, a practice of being aware of God's presence by reviewing your day with gratitude. It provided me with a way to find God in what I saw as the stupid little details of my day. When I had run into a friend on campus just when I needed a pick me up. Or got to each lunch at my favorite burrito place with my roommate. God became infused in the monotony. Constantly reaching out to me with always yet another opportunity for relationship.

This is still a form of prayer that I practice because I believe in the importance of finding God in all things, but I also know that we are called to more. As Christians who profess faith in the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are constantly

being invited into relationship and I believe that we are to respond in kind. We must allow the love of our God who is drawn into relationship at God's very essence mold us into the people we were created to be. A people who were formed in the image and likeness of a relational God who claims us for God's own.

In my life, this means engagement. I pray so that I am able to recognize God reaching out for me but I have to engage those moments when I find them. Overcome the introvert within me and make small talk with the chatty person sitting next to me on the bus. Allow myself to be overcome with joy as I sit in the sun on a bench in the park. Know that God is present with me in the chaos that fills my google calendar and be able to name God's presence as such. For it is in both the naming and the engagement of God's presence in our lives that we are able to more fully enter into our nature as relational creatures.

Because that's what we were made for. To be a part of our God whose very essence is relationship. Perfect community. We must respond to the call to pay attention and engage in the love that is constantly surrounding us.

Amen.
