

Denice K. Leslie
June 3, 2007
Trinity Sunday C
John 16: 12 – 15
Romans 5: 1 – 5
Proverbs 8: 1-4, 22- 31
Psalm 8

“Missing In Action?”

A man, very ancient of days, on a Moped pulls up next to a young lawyer driving a hot new Ferrari GTO. The old man looks at the sleek, shiny new car and asks, “Young man, what kind of car is that?”

The lawyer tells him, adding, “It cost a half a million dollars!”

Shocked at the price, the old man asks, “Why does it cost so much?”

“Because,” the lawyer says, “This car can do up to 320 miles an hour!”

The Moped driver asks, “Mind if I look inside?” “No problem,” replies the lawyer. So the old man pokes around and then, getting back on his Moped says, “That’s a pretty nice car, alrightbut I’ll stick with my Moped.”

Just then the light changes, so the lawyer decides to show the old man just what his car can do. He floors it, and within 30 seconds, the speedometer reads 160 mph. suddenly, he notices a dot in his rear view mirror. It seems to be getting closer. He slows down to see what it could be when WHHOOOSH! Something whips by him going much faster!

“What on earth could be faster than my Ferrari?” The lawyer wonders as he floors the accelerator again and takes the Ferrari to 250 mph. Then, up ahead of him, he sees that it’s the old man on the Moped!

Amazed that the Moped could pass his Ferrari, he passes the Moped at 275 mph and feels pretty good until he looks in his mirror and sees the old man gaining on him AGAIN!

Astounded by the sped of this old guy, he puts the pedal to the metal and takes the Ferrari all the way up to 320 mph.

Not ten seconds later, he sees the Moped bearing down on him again! But the Ferrari is flat out, there’s nothing he can do.

Suddenly, the Moped plows into the back of his Ferrari, demolishing the rear end. The non-plussed lawyer stops, jumps out and, unbelievably the old man is still alive. He runs up to the mangled Moped driver and says, ‘O My Gosh! Is there anything I can do for you?’

The old man whispers, “Just...just.... unhook...my suspenders...from your...side view mirror.”¹

Ever feel like your life is whizzing along out of control? That somewhere along the way you and the world around you missed something pretty important? Taking time to stop and smell the flowers is an old cliché that comes to mind. Age has a way of realizing speed kills—perhaps that’s why the old gentleman in the joke preferred the Moped. Unfortunately the rest of the world is so busy WHOOSHING along, without realizing how much damage is being done or what’s causing it....or what’s missing in life. And that’s dangerous. A dangerous way to live life—unconsciously—or I would say without being fully God conscious. Conscious of who God is and how God operates in the world. The understanding of God as three in one helps us here. So let’s start with God:

Well, we all appreciate days of temperate weather, beautiful evenings like we’ve had here the last week—gorgeous vistas, time with loved ones, good food, green lawns.... God’s world IS beautiful and life, when we stop long enough to reflect on it IS good.

The goodness and beauty of nature are one way for us to recall the good intentions of our Creator in providing this world for us—and in God’s intentions of blessing and well being for us. The beauty of nature reflects for us who God is. And a part of God that never, ever changes. A given—like the blessings of night and day. The essence of who God is, is changeless.

¹ “The Old Man and the Moped,” Thanks to whoever it was who stuck this in my box this week!

But circumstances interrupt and obscure God's blessings in life. I don't know about you, but having recently experienced two long international flights, I was keenly interested in finding out the flight information for the young lawyer with the drug resistant strain of TB. He was on his way to his wedding! In Greece and a honeymoon in Italy, wasn't it? Think about that—what should be a life dream come true, is about to be snatched away—if not his very life—by a deadly disease. What to do? He weighs his options and chooses to go in spite of knowing he has this deadly disease.

The reality is life isn't fair. The innocent suffer and in seeking the joy and wholeness God intends for all of us, we can become perpetrators by victimizing others around us either intentionally or unintentionally by our decisions. We know the good and want the good, but in making choices we think will make us happy; we can and do hurt others.

And we can rage all we want to but we feel pretty powerless to do much about it don't we? Like the horror of the ongoing seemingly never-ending blood shed in Afghanistan and Iraq. We didn't plan it this way. But here we are. Hind sight is always 20-20. The political pundits can argue the right and the wrong of it until they are blue in the face—in the meantime people are dying and a country is being destroyed. The question before us is, "Now what?" Can we with a good moral conscious simply pick up and leave? Or do we leave the rhetoric on all sides behind us and stick it out, if for no other reason than to defend the populace from all sides? If possible. Big if. But that's a bird walk we can debate another day—the point is:

Life —real life isn't fair, is complicated—feels like our suspenders are stuck to the side view mirror and we all too often have no choice about the speed at which it drags us along and slams us into the rear end. But let's not miss the most important thing in all of this action. Yes, we often miss the fact of God in the signs and beauty of nature in our focus to survive every day but the fact is, taking time to smell the flowers and attributing this goodness to God is a little ho hum given current reality—I mean it doesn't make God very relevant to the

more pressing reality of the world around us. God isn't just in the bloom of the rose or the rosiness of the sunset. God is not just a flower wizard or a dabbler in sunsets. Nice to be recalled and put away like a nice greeting card.

God is on the rear of the car with us.

This is exactly where we find God's presence as well as in the rose and sunset or a new baby's perfect fingers—in the whoosh and the slam—because God has chosen to enter into it with us. Jesus comes. In our flesh and blood. With sandals and a walking stick and a cross—no Ferrari, no Moped. But with all that we need to unhook our suspenders. And pick us up off the rear end and put us back on our feet. With forgiveness for our misjudgments, intentional bad choices and playing God ways. But why? Why should God bother?

For what purpose? I mean I can't keep up with the Ferrari of real life when I (and I confess prefer) to drive a Moped!

That's where the next expression of God's personhood enters in—in the Holy Spirit.

When the whoosh and the slam crucify Jesus, the whoosh and the slam free his power—like crushing a seed pod or blowing apart a dandelion fuzz ball.

The release is potent and no matter what the whoosh and slam do what God does with it can't be undone. Hope is alive in the world once more and God's love takes permanent root in our earthly reality. The desire of God to save us is powerful. And once rescued we have a choice—we can become a part of the rescue party or... well

God, you see does have a purpose. It is to save us and the world. Its up to us to see it for what it is because otherwise, God too drives a Ferrari and we will be pulled along in the whoosh and experience the slam if we deny what God's will is. If we prefer to drive a Moped and ignore what ails this world, what ails our neighbors or our marriages or our children or our culture or our governments or our environment. If we are satisfied to just sit and smell the roses and view the sunset and let the world go to hell in a hand basket—we'll go with it. Because God's Spirit is not only as gentle as the evening breeze but as

powerful as a tornado—not that God puts tornadoes in people’s backyards—I’m noting saying that. But because the Spirit is the power of God at work in this world. God, like the young lawyer driving the new Ferrari, invites us to not only have a look around inside but to sit in the driver’s seat. In giving us the Holy Spirit *God shares power with us.*

Pretty amazing fact, huh? Do you see? Asks God. I am the beginning the end, the means, the life, the way of it all—a triangle of creation, love and power here for you in the now and beyond the end.

We human beings call these three ways of experiencing God the Trinity.

Friday evening I went to Gateway, Enterprise and Clovis Day School’s graduation ceremony. Each one got up and shared their personal journeys. These young people have lived the whoosh and slam at a very tender age when most kids’ biggest concerns are sports, the next exam, the opposite sex, communicating with their parents, and relationships with their peers.

The teachers and counselors at their schools gave these young people new hope—reasons to go on living after teen pregnancy, drugs, disrupted home lives, developmental problems—The power to pick up their dreams and move forward—to have renewed faith in themselves and more--to discover gifts they didn’t know they had.

We don’t have to go to the Middle East to incarnate God’s love. We don’t have to become politicians to make change. God’s sustaining presence, God’s love at work in our flesh, and the gift of God’s Spirit power given to each of us as Jesus’ followers can not only unhook our suspenders from the whoosh and slam but help us be at work in it others lives right here at home—Its my hope that you will have a deeper appreciation for the three ways in which God is present and at work in our lives so that you may participate more consciously and actively in being a part of God’s purpose in our world... because this is what discipleship is all about.