

Come Together: The Womb of God

Matthew 3:1-12 March 13, 2011

First Sunday of Lent

- I. Come Together is the title of this Lenten sermon series, so I'd like to open with...
 - A. Here come ol' flattop he come grooving up slowly
He got joo-joo eyeball he one holy roller
He got hair down to his knee
Got to be a joker he just do what he please
Come together, right now – over me.
 - B. Ah yeah, good song.
 - C. But it has nothing to do with this series of sermons this Lent.
 - D. Nope. Over this Lent season we'll be looking at how we come together spiritually as human beings and the experiences of God that guide our lives as we go through life.
- II. So let us start where it all begins -- The Womb
 - A. There is very little that is as wonderful as the warm caressing water of a hot tub after a long, hard, cold day of skiing.

- B. Feeling that nurturing warmth surround your stiff aching body.
Oh, it is a religious experience.
- C. It is also an experience that takes us back to our most primal experience of being in our mother's womb;
that feeling of being warm, safe, secure, unconfused, absolutely dependant.
- D. We don't have any conscious memories of those times; but that time in the womb is the foundation of all our memories.
It sets the foundation upon which all of the rest of our experiences are felt, constructed and perceived.
Just floating in the womb of God, in the womb of love.
Just close your eyes for a few moments and feel the love.
Go ahead and keep 'em closed and I'll tell you when to open them.
- E. You're just floating in those warm caressing waters.
It's a feeling people strive to return to.
When we have our deep religious experiences of absolute love, security, peace and dependency it is to this most primal lived experience of the womb that we return.

F. Our first and deepest understanding of the cosmos and God is this primal experience of the womb.

It is the foundation of our sense of being loved and the foundation of our ability to love others; the basis upon which we learn to trust reality.

III. And then life plays this cruel joke on us.

A. Just as we are getting really comfortable and beginning to really appreciate this wonderful womb environment, our whole world begins to shake, a quaking beyond compare, with forces beyond our control pushing us out of this warm nurturing environment and into this unbearable bright light.

“No, no – I don’t want to go.”

Now you can open your eyes.

B. The ability to then bond again to our mother and again feel the love, the security and warmth;

that compassion again gives us some of our first experiences of the cosmos, of God and of love.

IV. We are all aware that in the early months of infancy -- that those feelings

of love and bonding provide us with a healthy psychological and spiritual foundation.

- A. It is in this time that we learn to trust or, in tragic cases, to distrust the world around us.
- B. It is also an experience that provides the basis for our spiritual development and our early ability to trust God.
- C. In so many ways what the mystics have sought in their meditation has been a return to this sense of thought free, secure, all encompassing compassion; an awareness of being in the womb of God; the joy of being bonded to mother.
- D. What we often experience as an awareness of God is a return to the pre-cognitive or “before thinking” feeling of the womb. This comes to a mature mind that has more experiences of life as an awareness of God.
- E. As an adult we are aware that what we are ultimately feeling is more than just the security of our Mother’s womb which we left behind years ago. What we now are experiencing is the all

encompassing compassion of the womb of God.

- V. In our scripture this morning we encountered a spiritual leader who was, even without the benefit of modern psychology, very aware of the spiritual awareness that comes with birth.
- A. John the Baptist was perhaps aware that some people don't have the best of birthing experiences as in his day it was quite normal for mothers and infants to die in the process, or that their life experiences had taken them on a road that led them far away from God's love.
 - B. Perhaps it was their own acts or their station in life that had separated them from God. The Jewish religion of John's day made it almost impossible for the vast majority of people to have a relationship with God.
 - C. So John provided for such people a ritual and a sacrament meant to restore that trusting, compassionate relationship with God; namely baptism.
 - 1. Just a quick side note –

- a) The difference between a ritual and a sacrament is that a ritual is something that we do and a sacrament is something that God does.
 - b) In a Protestant church like ours, we recognize 2 sacraments; the sacrament of Baptism and the sacrament of Communion.
 - c) And in each, we perform the ritual, but God is the one who effects the change. Something that God has already done, even before we get around to the ritual.
2. So John the Baptist performed the ritual of baptism, a baptism of repentance; but it was God / is God who forgives and compassionately welcomes the baptized.
 3. So in John's baptism we see a restoration of that trusting, compassionate relationship with God.
 4. There are two very important metaphors involving water in operation in the act of baptism.
 - a) One is the metaphor of washing away ones sins.
Like the soul taking a bath and washing all the dirt away.

- b) But the second metaphor is probably even more powerful and that is the metaphor of rebirth.
 - (1) The waters of baptism symbolize the waters of the womb out of which one is reborn.
 - (2) With this rebirth out of the waters of the womb one is restored to or reassured of that early trusting, secure, compassionate relationship with God.

VI. Our reality is that sometimes things happen in life that either we have done or that have happened to us that make us doubt that love of God.

- A. It could be that maybe you didn't have the bonding at birth that gave you a sense of trust.
- B. Or perhaps some events in your life destroyed that trust.
- C. Or maybe there was something you did that you think is just unforgivable.
- D. So baptism gives us a ritualistic and sacramental reassurance of God's love.

E. Whether done as an infant or as an adult-- baptism is a reminder that nothing can separate us from the love of God; nothing can take away the reality that we are still bathing in the secure warmth of the womb of God.

VII. The recognition that we are still bathing in the womb of God brings us to an awareness of another reality and that is our Ultimate Dependency upon God.

A. Just as one in a mother's womb is totally dependent upon the mother, we too recognize that we are totally, absolutely, ultimately, dependent upon God.

B. As a baby that is clearly the relationship we have with the world around us and with God, a relationship that is manifested in a baby's relationship to its mother.

C. But for adults, who begin to believe and live in the illusion that who and what we are is of their own making.
For those in this delusional state -- learning to trust God and to recognize their absolute dependence upon God can be a very arduous road to go down.

VIII. In a moment we will be participating in the sacrament of communion.

- A. Again while it is a ritual that we perform, the real effective action behind it is from God.
- B. Like baptism, communion is a reminder that we are in constant inseparable communion with God.
- C. It is a communion that is of God's doing, not ours.
- D. Even though the words came from the mouth of a man, human and male; as a mother to one inside her womb it was God's voice being heard when Jesus said, "This is my body, my life, broken and shared with you.
This is my blood, the container of the Spirit, that is shed for you."
- E. Even more than the bread we eat, we are dependent upon the love of God for our very being.
- F. Let us learn to trust God and to find peace in the Womb of God.
AMEN.