

Interconnectivity (Part Two)

“In God we live and move and have our being”

Reflection 56 in the series “A New World in the Morning”

The Christian notion of eternal life, revealed most radiantly in the Gospel of John, is such a great truth. It comes down to knowing God, to being still and aware of God’s presence within and all around us, to God’s love pouring into us and joy and vitality pouring out of us, to feeling one with God, open to the divine flow, streams of living water flowing from within us, sensing the interconnectivity of all that is. Or again back we go to Paul’s speech in Athens, this time to his quotation of a Greek poet, “In him [God], we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). And he’s able to quote a Greek poet, a poet thought to be pagan, because we’ve all always known this! In him we live and move and have our being. There is always everywhere interconnectivity.

God’s right here. For everyone everywhere. Right now. This takes us back to something we said about dimensions before. Imagine dimensions beyond the three we see – length and width and height. Imagine a fourth one, a fourth dimension. Scientists tell us there are many more than four! Ten, eleven, maybe more. Just stick with one more. Imagine how a being who could operate in that fourth dimension would be perceived by us. Well, you can’t. I can’t. We can’t. Or maybe we can, maybe a little, with a thought experiment I first learned from Rob Bell. Maybe we can imagine a two-dimensional universe, a flatland, just length and width.

Imagine two “people” in this flatland; they can only see in two dimensions, along the length-width plane that they are on. And I, a three-dimensional being, come right up to them. I’m not on their plane. They can’t see me. And I put the palm of my hand so very, very close to them, right up against them. And one of them says, “Hey, did you sense that?”

“What?” the other says.

– “I thought I sensed something. Did you?”

– “Nope!”

– “You didn’t? It was right here!”

And the other says, “You’re crazy, you know that! You’re crazy!”

But who is right and who is wrong?

Or suppose that I, this three-dimensional me, decides to really interact with them, and I just stick my hand fingers-first straight into their 2-D world, right through the plane they live on. And now they both see something. Five circles, different sizes, different times, first one, then another; finally my thumb makes it through. And one, the skeptic, says, “So what? Five circles! Big deal!”

And the other says, “No, I think they’re all somehow connected here! I think there’s a pattern. These five circles are connected. Something’s going on!”

And the other says, “You’re crazy!”

But who is right and who is wrong?

With this in mind, I think of the just resurrected Jesus those two Sunday evenings in Jerusalem. It happens on the evening of that first Resurrection Sunday. And it happens again a week later (all this in John 20). The doors are locked. And Jesus astonishingly shows up in the middle of his disciples. Just maybe we have here an encounter like this: a hint of higher reality, of a God who moves through the fourth dimension – or however many dimensions there are.

So God is as close as the air we breathe. No, God is closer. Literally, in God we live and move and have our being. We all do. Catch the connections as Paul did that day long ago in Athens. God is always right here, right now. Though our doors are locked, God is here among us – and among people all over the world who take communion every Sunday. But in fact, as Paul says, God is not far from anyone. In God we all live and move and have our being. And our concern as a church, as a church of Christ, is for human flourishing everywhere. Globally.

We are all in this together. So it matters, it matters to all of us, when there’s a shooting in Orlando, or hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees pouring into Europe, or tidal flooding in Miami or a stampede at the Hajj in Mecca that kills over 700 and injures nearly a thousand. And more and more people everywhere are looking for churches who know this – who care about more than their own stuff and recognize the interconnectivity of all that is.

So here’s the glorious opportunity: To be still and aware of the presence of God within and all around us, the presence of a loving God who is not far from each one of us, who promises, “I will be found by you,” who offers us life filled with expectancy, a sure, settled conviction that good will happen, life surrounded by grace, animated by trust, transcendent life, interconnected life, increasingly conscious of God within us and all around us, as close as the air we breathe, no, even closer, inside us, joyful life, often euphoric, inseparable from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

We deny or defy God only at great risk to ourselves. In God we mindfully live and move and have our being. Or we deny fundamental reality. And if we realize this, all sorts of things become possible, a new world in the morning, a new world where more and more people see how interconnected we are. And we can rise out of ourselves. We can let go of the way we’re stuck in and on ourselves. We can experience God’s love pouring into us and joy and vitality pouring out of us. We can feel one with God, open to the divine flow, streams of living water flowing out from within us.

– Dale Pauls