

A Cosmic Policy -- Pent+24B -- Proper 27B

The Letter to the Hebrews relates that Jesus went to actual factual heaven and thus God now knows what it's really like being human. What is it really like being human? We have two parts to our lives; two realms. The shorter part we're living here now on earth, among other things having conversations about what it's like being human, what God knows and is up to, etc., and the much longer part afterwards (some say before, too) when we are with God and can know and see for ourselves. Not only know and see, but drink deeply of the nectar of wisdom, and eat our fill of the ambrosia of truth.

We live these the shorter parts of our lives expecting to face those longer ones. So did Jesus. Because God was and is and ever shall be determined to find out what the Sam Hill is wrong with us, for Christ's sake (literally), and to help alleviate whatever pain and fear is causing us to be such violent screw-ups here on earth, starting with the first-born Cain and continuing to this day. God is determined to know us. As the psalmist sang, "O Lord you search me and you know me; you know my resting and my rising, you discern my purpose from afar."

So Jesus became fully human: having a full human life, with those same two parts like us. There was his earthly life to conduct, which was pretty colorful. Think how much work it would be if you were able, and thus obligated to choose and predetermine all of your behaviors on the basis of moral purity. You'd have to be perfect! You'd get so good at it, your thoughts would start to become pure, as both collects we prayed today would suggest. What a daunting prospect! This is why they say the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: If I'm wise, I'm gonna be afraid of considering myself quite so highly and approaching perfection. Instead, I ought to let my

work be to try and identify some of my own sins -- well-knowing that I will never get finished with the job -- and leave the ruling to the Almighty.

The other part of Jesus' life, the longer one, was described by John the Divine: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And it was described by John the Revelator: "I am the Alpha and the Omega--the beginning and the end," says the Lord God; "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come."

Don't forget Jesus was on a dual mission: find out the above info -- what the Sam Hill is wrong with us, etc., and also convince us that we are worthy enough -- by virtue of our need -- to warrant a personal visit, a mile in our shoes (a mile and-a-half in our shoes) by God. Our need for awareness of God is far, far greater than that of anything else in creation. Listen to the psalmist: "Praise ye sun and moon: all ye stars of light, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens, ye dragons, and all deeps, fire, and hail, snow, and vapour, stormy wind all fulfilling God's word. God 'stablished you for ever and ever and hath made a decree which shall not pass." None of them needs a catechism or school curriculum. But we humans, with every reason to get along with one another, continually behave to an astonishing degree as if humility were an option, as if conservation of natural resources were a suggested policy, as if compassion were a recommended choice and God were an interesting idea. The whales and the fishes don't judge one another, and they don't have to judge themselves; they come biologically pure of thought. But we don't have that simplicity. We come prone to suspicion about others, shame about ourselves and skepticism about our relative unimportance in the cosmos.

As the swami Inayat Khan observes, “We human beings are limited in thought, speech, and action. We’re naturally liable to folly and error. Our progress through life can only be made the way little child learns to walk, falling a thousand times before it can stand. We are no more than children before God. If we remember to take this attitude in life -- not assuming that because yesterday we failed, today we are doomed to fail, but always hoping that some day we shall walk upright -- that hour will come. Imagine if a child thought that because she had fallen so often, perhaps she would never walk! Instead there is a natural hope, ‘Next time I shall!’ Our follies, shortcomings and errors are natural, but when we defend ourselves, hide our errors from others and justifying our shortcomings, it is then we nurture and perpetuate those follies. Our sense of justice can never be developed while we are judging others. The only way of developing it is to assess ourselves continually instead - - to see where we are at fault -- and then in prayer to ask for pardon and right guidance.”

When we have known darkness then we can appreciate the light. We must allow the darkness in our lives to appear and move on if we are to appreciate the beauty and wonder of the light.

So Jesus had a big job of work to do to convince us He was who He was. “I am who I am!” is what God said to Moses back in the day, and that might have been enough for us. But the audience was too small, the reviews were mixed, and the word didn’t spread very fast. Don’t forget, this incursion into the human sphere would be a violation of God’s tacit agreement not to interfere in our affairs. We’re supposed to be on our own out here east of Eden. So how did God justify a departure from policy? (God is not an interesting idea; God is the maker of cosmic policy). It went like this: God was determined enough to know us – for God so loved the World -- so as to intervene

once for all by coming on this two-pronged mission in Jesus. God's determination to love took precedence over God's policy to let go.

The only way to mitigate the effects of God's incursion it was to restrict any major difficulties, as much as possible to Jesus' physical person, rather than having an affect on individual humans. "I'll go down there disguised as a human – in human drag," thinks the Deity, "Nobody will notice me unless and until I want them to." As if. Jesus can't keep from healing people, can't resist preaching and teaching, telling deeply challenging stories; lots of people notice and are affected.

People were and still are being affected, deeply and permanently by the stories and activities of Jesus. The more Jesus tells people to keep the stories quiet, they more the stories get told abroad. We've been telling them ever since, to anybody who would listen and to many who would not or could not. That 'keep quiet' part of God's strategy didn't work, but the rest of it did. Jesus' determination to make a full journey through human life is what convinces us that 'He am what I am.' Jesus' love (God's love) for the project of humankind is so great as to provide especially for the greatest need of humankind – the need we have for the awareness of God – despite the brutal cost of that providence.

Because it was only in dying by choice and for our benefit that Jesus could both share our experience fully and also convince us that we are worthy of God's love. As convincing as God's presence was in Jesus, it's not strange that we know God lives on and on in us. It transforms us makes us joyful indeed to think of the risen Christ, but it's no wonder; it is what it is.