

From the November 4, 2010 Issue

God the Trinity has Come to Stay

It seems that this is the primary emphasis I am receiving in the gospel of late! In my Trinitarian Youth Class, whether it be Dr. Andrew Root's book *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, or Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*, the message is the same: "I, the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit have come to be with you where you are, and We're not going anywhere!"

The point of this is simple but profound. Not only has God become human in Jesus, and not only is He still human in glorified humanity, BUT He has come to be with us where and as we really are, and He's not going anywhere, whether or not we accept or reject Him! Now that's taking Advent (the coming of Jesus) seriously!

I am certain that most of our readers already have some sense of this, but the new sense in which we can be educated in the coming of Jesus is to know that He wasn't primarily coming to influence us or to "do his thing" on us! In other words, Jesus didn't come to have a relationship with us toward some other end than the relationship!

Now don't get me wrong, He certainly transformed us in his Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, so that in our resurrection, we will share in the forever kind of glorified existence He has in His body. But that doesn't necessarily mean we're going to like it (hence all of the scriptures that speak of people potentially rejecting Christ even after He returns to earth in Glory!)

In Jesus, God is like us (or we're like Him—however you want to see that), but there is still another sense in which we are wholly unlike God and forever will be. One sense in which we are unlike Him apart from Him sharing Himself with us is that we "love" conditionally. For example, I was once assigned to speak to and relate with high school youth at a festival in Myrtle Beach. Talk about ROUGH! They were unruly, inattentive, talkative, and just plain into their own world, and speaking to them was more than a little frustrating! I pretty much swore off ever doing that again. In God's grace, I haven't stopped loving and working with youth, even unruly ones, BUT I sure have wanted to and have backed off some.

The difference between what I did and Who and what God does is VAST, to say the least! In the light of understanding God the Trinity to be permanently with us in Jesus at His coming—and His never going away—I see that one reason I was unable to hang in there with the young people is that that is not the kind of Gospel I had or understood at the time! I had a Gospel that was:

I am with you to turn you to Jesus (do my thing on you), and if you don't let me or you cause me any suffering whatsoever, I'm outta here! I am only with you relationally to get you to some third thing, Jesus, and will only be with you if do that. Relationship isn't the main thing, but only a tool in my arsenal to get you to the real thing. And when you get there, I want you to go and use others in the same way so they can be manipulated in this technique and get notches on their spiritual belt, too, and do the same to others, ad nauseam!

Obviously I didn't REALLY say and think about it that way or in those terms, but in looking back on that experience through the Revelation of the Triune God in Jesus, that is pretty much what I was saying and thinking! I am so thankful that God the Trinity—through Bonhoeffer, Root, Ted

Johnston and Greg Williams—is helping me to see and be differently, in Jesus' seeing and being.

And the Truth (Jesus!) is so much better than the unreality I was promoting. Bonhoeffer and Root call it “Place-sharing,” and it is the truth that God, in Jesus, reveals that this Relationship, PERIOD, is the concrete place of God’s Presence. Jesus (with His Father and the Holy Spirit) doesn’t use relationship with us to accomplish some other thing or push some other agenda, but comes to us simply to share Himself with us and relate with us as we really are (in the Light or in the darkness!) Wow!

And that helps me explain why one of my very favorite songs in the whole world is “Loving You” by Xavier O’ Connor. You can view it on YouTube here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dy2tZGwgGA8>

And I think it most fitting to conclude with the lyrics from that song, ‘cause nothing says it like a song, sometimes:

Lovin’ You

By Xavier O’ Connor

It’s easy for you to say that you’re in love with somebody

It’s easy for you when they love you too

It’s easy for you to say how much you care for somebody

It’s easy for you when they care for you

Oh, but imagine if You were only made to love one somebody

And they never even knew that You were there

What would you settle for? A one way love, or would you turn and walk away?

No, not Me, I would still have to show that I cared

Chorus:

Because Lovin’ You isn’t just a hobby of mine

Lovin’ you isn’t just a way to past the time

Lovin’ you isn’t just one of the many things that I can do

Lovin’ you is Who I Am

What can I do to prove to you that My love’s forever

What more can I say just to show that I’m for real

What is there to lose if you would take me up on my offer

And why don’t you choose to remember Calvary’s Hill

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Because all that I've done for you, I would do again,
Even if it would mean that you didn't change your mind when I got through
I guess I'm stuck on you in spite of all you've done in the past
I don't care, I just know that I love you
And I gotta have Me some you

Chorus:

Lovin' you isn't just a hobby of Mine
Lovin' you isn't just a way to past the time
Lovin' you isn't just one of the many things that I can do
Lovin' you is Who I Am

Bridge:

I have a love that won't change with the seasons
And My love don't fade with the wind
My love won't measure the pros and the cons
Before risking to love you again

I have a love that don't mind being broken
As long as I'm broken by you, only you
And My love don't measure that you only call when you need Me
'Cause my love is true

Chorus:

Lovin' you isn't just a hobby of Mine
Lovin' you isn't just a way to past the time
Lovin' you isn't just one of the many things that I can do
Lovin' you is Who I Am
Lovin' you is Who I Am

Advent—the PERMANENT coming of the Lord—how sweet the sound!

~ Timothy Brassell