

Being What We Will Be

Series: Discipleship with Integrity; 1 John 3: 1-2

Do you pay attention to sermon titles? Sometimes mine are really good: catchy, informative, and even provocative. Not this one. *Being What We Will Be*. I'm not even sure what that means! It does come right out of today's scripture passage (1st John). One translation reads: "it does not yet appear what we shall be, but ... we shall be like him". The words remind me of that famous passage from 1 Corinthians 13: "Now we see dimly, as in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. We shall know even as we have been known."

No one could look on God and live, the Hebrews believed. Moses got to see God, but only the backside passing by. When we encounter God "face to face," perceiving the essential nature of who God is, -- and for Christians, we perceive that essential nature of God in Jesus -- we discover who we truly are. To the extent we are what we will be, we're like Jesus. Seeing Jesus is being Jesus. That's who we are and what we'll be!

Isn't that clear? And you thought being Christian was simple? It sounds so simple to follow Jesus -- and it is simple. Follow Jesus -- that's all. Everything -- simple, but not easy

This sermon series is called Discipleship with Integrity (DWI). The theme that seems to be emerging in this series involves the challenges of being followers of Jesus -- disciples. These are not primarily challenges of the intellect -- what we believe or how we understand. The challenges of discipleship with integrity are mainly challenges of living, of trusting, and of dealing with doubts and fears. These are the challenges of committing ourselves to something greater than ourselves -- the rather large challenge of giving ourselves fully to the journey of faith.

The scripture lesson from 1 John 3 challenges us to be what we will be. It does this in three ways. First, can we trust that God loves us? Second, can we trust that we are really God's children? Third, can we trust the direction of our lives even when we don't know just where we are going?

This is a great time to look at these questions of trust and direction. Crossroads Church is in the middle of a direction setting retreat. What great timing! We gather to focus on discerning God's movement in our life as church and to make plans for how to structure our ministry for the coming year. We're trying to figure out where we're going while also celebrating being community together and acknowledging the challenges we face individually and as a congregation.

The first challenge is to trust that God loves us. The writer of 1 John 3: 1-2 expects his readers to trust that assertion. Can we trust God loves us? Trust means to lean on completely, to put all our weight on and give ourselves without holding back. It can be really tough for any of us to trust. I generally trust that the floor will bear my weight when I get out of bed in the morning. With slightly less certainty, I trust the car will start and carry me to work. I trust less in love -- that I am loved.

To trust in love means to trust that I feel affection, commitment, attraction, and strong desire for the well being of another. It also means I trust that another feels affection, commitment, and attraction toward me, and a strong desire for my well-being. Can love be unconditional -- freely received and freely given? Or are there always strings attached to love? Can we learn to trust more and accept the love given to us by others and by God? That's the learning task of being a disciple of Jesus.

The second challenge from this passage is to trust our identity as God's children. We mean this literally when we believe that God is creator of all life. All of us are God's children. It is also a faith statement, a trust statement. The challenge is for us to trust in the intimate parent-child relationship between you and *Being itself* whom we call God.

To trust this way means committing to a journey of learning who God is. It also means committing to a journey learning who we are – to find yourself. The 20th-century Indian spiritual teacher Krishnamurti writes:

To know yourself is the most arduous task that you can set yourself. You can go to the moon, you can do everything in life, but if you don't know yourself, you will be empty [and] dull. ... Feel the seriousness of knowing yourself – not what people have said about you.... Wipe away all the things that people have said, and observe your own minds and your own hearts, and from there function. (*On Freedom*, 1992)

What word would you use to describe yourself? We comprise a rich tapestry of descriptions when you put us all together. Diversity creates some friction, but makes us complex and dynamic. What word would you use to describe Crossroads Church?

What would you say are your main gifts, what you bring to life? Each of us possesses talents, aptitudes, and experiences. We offer them to each other, to life, as our gifts. We bless and challenge each other. Ultimately, our giftedness lies in who we are as people. Your gift is yourself. Our congregational gift is us.

The third challenge is to trust in the direction of our lives even though we don't really know where we're going. Christian mystic John Main has written: "One of the challenges we all face is to be continually sensitive to the unfolding of God's plan in our lives; to give free and open assent to the destiny this love is shaping for us." *The Present Christ* (1985)

There is the story of Rabbi Zuscha who, on his death bed was asked what he thought life beyond the grave would be like. The old man thought for a long time: then he replied: 'I don't really know. But one thing I do know: when I get there, I am not going to be asked "Why weren't you Moses?" or "Why weren't you David?" I am going to be asked, "Why weren't you Zuscha?"'

What brings you to life? What enlivens and vitalizes you? It could be creative action. It could be quiet reflective. The New Testament says that Jesus came "that we might have life...abundantly". We discover and create that life through our living, as a result of our choices, and in concert with those we love.

What deadens you? What is it that just sucks the life out of you? Fear deadens me. There are many things I fear, but it is the reality of my fear that works against the life forces inside me.

What brings Crossroads Church to life? What deadens us? We can discover and create the direction of our lives by dreaming dreams and realizing them. This is called vocation – to do what we dream of doing and to do what brings us life. Pastor Gordon Cosby has written:

Vocation has the element of knowing that, if you respond to the call, you are faithful to your own inner being and you are enhanced by it. Your own awareness converges with some need out yonder and intersects with it in such a way that you have the sense that you were born to this. *Handbook for Mission Groups*

What dreams do you have? Are you aware of the beginnings of a sense of calling? Toward what do you feel God nudging you? These are questions for each of us to consider. They are questions also for us as a body to consider. How do you perceive God's nudging for Crossroads? Our calling and our passions lie in different areas, yet flow from the same source -- God's Spirit. They also flow toward the same end: intimate communion with God and with each other.

What will we be? The scripture passage says we will be like Christ. What will that look like? We'll only discover this as we go. During this weekend of the direction setting retreat, there has been sharing out of our individual journeys. This has taken the form of overarching priorities, touching on directions and values (the big picture) for our community. This has also taken the form of discussions and workgroups formed around specific areas of passion and calling. Both the general priorities and the specific workgroups are slices of how we are becoming what we will be.

It takes courage to share honestly how the Spirit seems to be moving in our lives as individuals – to share with open hearts. We may risk even more to attempt that discernment as a congregation. Yet, what risk really? If we truly are loved by God and stand as God's children, the risk is not in seeking and sharing discernment. The real risk is not to seek and not to share, trying to play it safe. The only failure is not to try.

If the direction of our lives is to move to a point that we become like Christ, then let's not wait. Let's go there and not waste any time getting started.