Siblings of the Cosmic Christ Peace Presbyterian Church

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12 World Communion Sunday

Elizabeth M. Deibert 7 October 2018

Last Sunday, as you were being ably led in worship by the Revs. Cori Rigney and Bill Kemp, Richard and I were worshipping in my childhood church with my mother on her 92nd birthday, and we were hearing about relief effort for Hurricane Florence. I was so impressed with how that small congregation and was being energized and unified by the havoc of a hurricane in their area. And I am pleased to inform you that the Mission Team decided this week that some of our Disaster Assistance monies collected will go to help the Faison Presbyterian Church in their relief efforts in eastern Carolina. This is our connectional church at work with faces attached.

Of course, right after worship last Sunday came the shocking news from the Camphire family. I have been impressed by the bonds of love that hold us together in difficult times. You have prayed, brought food and gift cards. You have written checks and donated to the GoFundMe account. Yesterday the youth group and their parents, along with a few others, did a whole lot of yardwork at the Camphires, hoping to ease their burden just a bit. When you hurt for people, you want to be there to do whatever you can to help them. And they are so appreciative of your effort and your prayers.

We are created in the image of God, who made us to have this kind of compassion, this kind of sibling love. God loved us so much that God seeing us in our suffering, just had to do something, so God sent us, spoke to us, saved us by becoming one of us and one with us. This is eloquently expressed in the opening two chapters of Hebrews, from which we will read today:

**Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12**

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, **2**but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

**3**He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4**having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. **5**Now Goddid not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. **6**But someone has testified somewhere,

*“What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
    or mortals, that you care for them?****7****You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;
    you have crowned them with glory and honor,****8****subjecting all things under their feet.”*

Now in subjecting all things to them, Godleft nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, **9**but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lowerthan the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of Godhe might taste death for everyone. **10**It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. **11**For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason, Jesusis not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, **12**saying,

*“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters
    in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”*

(NRSV)

Jesus, who is the exact imprint of God’s very being. I’m going to say it again. Jesus, who is the exact imprint of God’s very being, is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. You know you have a friend in Jesus – *What a Friend we have in Jesus!* You know you have a Savior in Jesus – *Beautiful Savior, Ruler of all nature, oh Thou of God to earth come down* – but how often do you call Jesus brother? *Jesus our brother, kind and good, was humbly born in a stable rude*. Jesus is not that obnoxious brother nor than self-absorbed brother nor that brother who made you cry or made you mad.

No Jesus is that wise and gentle, sacrificial brother, that one who would support you and defend your dignity. He would listen to your problems, accepting you as you are and encouraging you to be your best. Jesus’ brotherhood is what unites us in one big family. *We are family – I’ve got all my sisters and me.* Jesus had a serious brotherhood with the disciples and here’s the thing – when women were not normally included, Jesus invited and listened to them. When women were disrespected, Brother Jesus was there loving them in a way that honored and treasured them. “Whoever has not sinned, go ahead, throw a stone.”

And this Jesus, our bro is also the Cosmic Christ, the One was with God from the beginning of creation. This Jesus our bro is the Cosmic Christ, who much more than the multitude of angels is holding this world together in love. Of course, we are distressed in every situation where we feel love is absent, in every situation where we believe there is no evidence of sibling love, of mutual affection and respect, in every situation where people are being neglected or abused or disrespected.

And thus, we celebrate World Communion to remind us that we belong to a larger family than the one gathered here. We collect the Peace and Global Witness Offering in the hope of making a difference for reconciliation in this fractured, divisive, and even polarized world. We make a commitment this day to be peacemakers in our words and actions to bring both justice and kindness to all of the children of earth, as we walk humbly with our God.

On this World Communion Sunday, we make our call for the value of human compassion and the disaster of mocking hatred and ridicule of those who views are different from ours. On this World Communion Sunday we declare the blessed righteousness of prayerfully weeping with those who weep. and rejoicing with those who rejoice, and never, ever laughing at those who weep or are underprivileged or struggling. As our Brief Statement of Faith announces, we listen to voices long-silenced, because we believe it is the Christ-like thing to do, and we never demean any human being, who is made in the image of God, and therefore is just a little lower than the angels of heaven. Speaking of angels, we rejoice that Barbara Noto’s mom, Nadine is singing with them now, though we will miss her here. **10**It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings.  Christ in bringing us to glory, in offering us himself for our salvation, was made perfect in suffering, not in winning and certainly not in gloating. In fact, the power of God is seen in weakness more than strength. The power of Christ is seen in suffering for and with others. Those who are filled with the Holy Spirit never abuse power, but use it to lift up others.

Jesus Christ is now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of Godhe might taste death for everyone. Christ does not remove our human suffering, for strangely enough, it seems that suffering itself has the power to be redemptive, to draw us tighter in human community, and that is where the church plays such a unique role. We are the brothers and sisters, the siblings of a Cosmic Christ, who was here before all of this, before all creation. As followers of this suffering, Cosmic Christ, we too are just below the angels in our power -- power to heal by suffering with (which is what compassion mean), and to love people so well that we lift them up out of the mire and into the glory of God’s love. It is not easy. We fail and flop, but we have been filled with Christ’s Spirit, so we do not give up hope or faith. We keep working to love. We keep opening up the table of welcome to all God’s children. God welcomes all.

Our table will always be an open table and this next song, which emerged from the slave community is a good reminder that we are singing for and with others – those silenced by oppression and aggression, people who could cook the meal and set the table and clean the kitchen but never sit down for the feast. We sing this song for them and for all others who have been mistreated and ignored. We sing this song for all who suffer remembering that their suffering and ours with them is NOTHING compared to the GLORY that will be revealed one day, one day, one day. Lord, hasten the day when your kin-dom is realized here, when we truly know one another as caring and kind siblings of the Cosmic Christ.