

Amy's Email Epistle – Thursday, March 1, 2018

1 Peter 2:4-10

Ancient near eastern religion which precedes Judaism, Christianity, and most all other religions by millennium was pantheistic. Recognizing a god within everything. Multiple gods. A spirit of a god dwelled within rocks, trees, birds, all living creatures. Humans were a part of the greater cosmos and had personal gods. (if you are interested in a deeper understanding I encourage you to read The Epic of Gilgamesh.) If you read Genesis 1:26 carefully you can find remnants of the pantheistic belief system. "26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, [a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

We moved away from pantheism long ago and into an understanding of one God. The God of all creation. God in everything. (the concept of humans having a personal god hasn't ever gone away - "do you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior" still the words often used to welcome a new person into a congregation and to baptism.)

What do you believe? Is God in everything?

As I reflect on one of today's lectionary readings 1 Peter 2:4-10 I cannot help, but hear the words of Tink Tinker - a professor at Iliff School of Theology, a Native American member of the Osage nation. At Turner Lectures this year he told a story of a time he attended a church assembly. The planning team had gone to great lengths to bring in medium to large sized river stones to line the pathway into the assembly hall. They wanted to create a certain feel. As he told the story I could imagine how it looked. I love stones and rocks. But then he shifted the focus in a way I did not expect. People were invited to pick up a stone and take it home with them. He told of how it hurt his heart. He waited around until the session had ended and began picking up the stones that were left. Someone said to him, "how are you going to take all of those home on the airplane?" his response was "I'm not taking them to my home, I'm returning them to their home." He carried each of the remaining stones back down to the river. He said they had not given their permission to be moved. They were "living stones." that is how his faith and spirituality understands all things.

Peter calls God through Jesus the Christ, "the living stone." What do you suppose that means? A foundation - a place to build upon? In the same way Jesus called Peter a rock, or perhaps it's a reference to the stone that covered his grave, that giant stone that was inexplicably moved. "the living stone." A cornerstone? What could it mean?

What if we were to treat everything, rocks, stones, trees, birds, grass, the sky, people, animals, cockroaches, ants, children, people who live outside, people of different culture, people of different political parties, people of different colors, people with different belief systems, people with faith, people without faith, EVERYTHING and EVERYONE as if it was a "living stone" as if God were within and a part of.... what if we asked before we moved the stones for our own use? What if we laid assumptions aside.

What if we truly lived as if God were the very stone foundation upon how we think, act, live?

What if.....?

Journey well...

Amy