

Sermon: Some Kiss!

Scripture: Acts 2:1-21

Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans

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The 13th century Persian poet and Sufi mystic, Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Balkhī, otherwise known as Rumi, wrote words that speak beautifully for what happened on Pentecost to the disciples of Jesus. He wrote: “There is some kiss we want with our whole lives: the touch of spirit on the body.” This kiss of the spirit is what the disciples received that day and it transformed them from a frightened huddling band of misfits into a community of God, inspired by Christ, to share His Spirit of life and healing and love. It has been said that Christ did not come to make bad people good but he came to make dead people alive. We in the church often frame the Christian faith as though it was essentially about moral progress, about becoming better people through moral improvement. But Christ was much more about spiritual transformation, about bringing deadened people to life, awakening the numb and sleep walking, helping them to feel again, love again, see clearly by tethering them back into God, from whom they had become lost.

Someone shared with me recently the experience of having cataract surgery that for the longest time they didn’t even know they needed and he said it was shocking, the way everything became colorful, bright, clear and crisp again and he hadn’t even known how bad it had gotten. It is something like that, that happens to the spirit. It’s a blurry, yellowish, underwater, seeing until comes that kiss of the Spirit and the experience is not - oh I need to be better, but rather I am suddenly alive and I didn’t even know I was dead, I can see clearly now and I didn’t even know how blind I had become. The moral

improvement that Christianity and the church teaches, arises out of that experience, not the other way around like that somehow we've got to be better and then we'll see right and receive God's spirit of life through our own merit. First, you see, comes the kiss. It's all about the kiss. That's what the disciples received on that first Pentecost, as Jesus promised they would. They received the kiss that we all want, that the human soul longs for, but that even the desire for it often lies buried too deep within us to recognize it. I set Rumi's poem to melody, let me sing it for you...

Some Kiss (text by Rumi, music by Rev. Will Burhans)

C F C F
 There is some kiss we want with our whole lives:
 C F C F
 the touch of spirit on the body.
 C F C F
 Seawater begs the pearl to break its shell
 C F C
 and the lilly, how passionately it needs some wild . . . darling.
 F C F C F C
 At night I open the window and ask the moon to come and press its face
 F
 against mine.
 C F
 Breathe into me,
 C F
 breath into me.
 C G C F
 Close the language door and open the love window,
 C F G C
 the moon won't use the door only the window.

The moon that Rumi refers to is that mystical image for the divine feminine, that calls to us in the dark and tugs us towards her by her gravitational pull. The divine feminine calling to us and tugging on us is how

the early Christians referred to the Spirit that Jesus gave to them after his resurrection. The word in Greek for Spirit they used is a feminine word - Sophia - and in Hebrew as well, the word is Ruah. While there was something obviously masculine about Jesus' presence as he walked the earth and gave his life for others and gave his death for others, there was something inherently feminine about how the disciples experience Jesus' Spirit after his resurrection. It was a Spirit not out front leading the way and asserting his authority and challenging people and calling them forward as an individual but rather inspiring from within to gather together and nurture the new life of the church into its becoming, all the - traditionally- feminine aspects of creation.

To answer Rev. Maeve's good question from her sermon last week - "where did the body go", meaning where did Jesus' fleshly body go in the end, you could it became so infused with light, so light in density that it became Spirit and came down to infuse into the people to create the church. Where did the body go, it became us the church. There's this beautiful diminishment that happens with the female body in the process of conceiving, growing life within her body and then expelling it outward into the world that is something akin to what happened at Pentecost, this birthing of the church, of this new people alive and awakened anew, so thoroughly and completely that Jesus' physical material body dissipates into spirit and enters other bodies to carry on His work in their bodies.

Jesus told the disciples he was going to do this and required them to wait and be in a receptive mode for what was coming, this transformation from typical male energy of Messiah presence to female energy of Spirit presence. And when She came, the Holy Spirit, boy did She ever! Not like a

sweet whisper and a delicate invitation but with a roaring wind and tongues of fire knocking the disciples silly, so much that those around them thought they were drunk! To say that the power of the Spirit is likened to feminine power in no way means it is less powerful than masculine power – trust me, as the one male over the last 3 decades in a household of women! – its only that the feminine power of Spirit expresses itself differently and then requires or elicits a different response. While masculine power individuates and thrusts outward, feminine power opens within and draws inward toward unity what is external. What happens through the feminine power of Spirit is that we come to know our identity not by how we are distinct and separate but by how we are connected and a part of one another, we humans in relation finally knowing how we fit into place, in relation to all creation and our Great Creator. It's a rebirth, a reawakening, if we are open enough to receive it. And that's how the church came to be, we say, that's where the body of Jesus Christ went. It became the body of Christ, the church.

There has been across the ages a theological distinction made between the visible church and the invisible church, the visible being the physical church made up of a facility and the people that attend and the sacraments and missions therein and the invisible church which is actually the Body of Christ. They are not necessarily one and the same, maybe, hopefully there is overlap there of course. And could it be that there are those who don't even consider themselves Christian who unbeknownst to us or even to them make up the body of Christ, those doing the work of love and healing and spiritual transformation that Christ was doing in his singular earthly body and is now doing in the body of Christ, the church, here on earth.

Isn't there some kiss we want with our whole lives, deep down within, the touch of spirit on our bodies, that draws us out from the room of logic and language into the wild beyond of the mystical and wonderful aliveness of something bigger than anything we could possibly know?

I think Conservative Christians want to frame it all as a hammer. The faith is explained and described in very literalist black and white terms - "The bible says it, I believe it. That does it!" You're either a believer and going to heaven or not and you're going to Hell. Liberals in response to this hammer want to frame it as an intellectual proposition that makes sense, and anything that falls outside of the rational - the miracles, the resurrection, the ascension, they explain in the mental category of metaphor. The resurrection is a good metaphor for life, the dying and rising of the natural world.

While both conservatives and liberals hold some part of the truth - there are the hard and cold facts of the faith that the conservatives claim and the scriptures are certainly chock-full of metaphors - but the faith ultimately is not a hammer or an intellectual proposition, the faith is more like a kiss. The lips of a parent on the forehead of a frightened child before bed saying all will be well. The lips of a friend on the cheek of a friend, expressing deep care and intimacy. The lips of lovers passionately coming together in awe and love of one another and losing time and space in the throes of that physical encounter. This is the image of the faith that transforms, the faith born at Pentecost, the faith that Jesus gave away his body for so that his body might become the body of others. This is the faith that we are to share, the one that comes by way of a Kiss, the kiss of peace, the kiss of love, the kiss we all want. Amen.