

Sunday, March 4, 2012
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

Sermon – “Set Your Mind on the Divine”

For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.

Scripture has been described as an account of God’s relationship to humans as well as human’s response to God.

We hear the gospel stories and we are reminded of our own humanity.

Peter, for example, was always trying to make things normal – he proposed putting up tents at the transfiguration; now he is promising undying loyalty even if he can’t do it.

He is always in the human sphere, but Jesus calls him into the divine.

A few weeks ago we talked about “thin places” those moments when the veil between heaven and earth is lifted.

Today, we again hear a summons to that place where God is present.

How is it that we move between these two worlds and are they distinct?

In our book discussion last week we explored the many dichotomies that make up earthly life: good and evil; light and dark; life and death – these opposites are most often distinct from one another.

When you are good you are not evil; when it is light, it is not dark; when you are alive, you are not dead. These are certainties in our lives.

Perhaps there is a moment when these seemingly opposites overlap, at dawn, or at death – but most often they are distinct and we expect them to remain so.

So the question before us today is whether the human and the divine fall into this category of dichotomy.

If they are distinctly different, our challenge becomes how to bridge them, so that we might move from the human to the divine.

If there are intersections, our challenge becomes how to find them and live in that space.

First we will acknowledge that there are two worlds – there is the human world where we work and toil and labor.

In the human world we are able to explain each and every action and reaction.

Everything has a reason.

This is where we spend most of our time.

Then there is the divine where there are simply things that we cannot explain.

This is where we find miracles.

In one of the most compelling essays in our Lent Book, *Belief*, C.S. Lewis discusses miracles and how we often overlook them.

He says,

The experience of a miracle requires two conditions. First we must believe in a normal stability of nature. We must believe that we understand the world and how it works.

Secondly, we must believe in some reality beyond Nature. To think and act in the natural world we have to assume something beyond it and even assume that we partly belong to that something.

Mystical writers and theologians have argued for centuries that there is an activity of God displayed throughout creation.

Lewis contends that *The miracles done by God incarnate, Jesus Christ, perform the very same things as this wholesale activity, but at a different speed and on a smaller scale. The miracles in fact are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see.*

Lewis' point is that the divine and the human world are interrelated, coexisting throughout time but that we, locked in our human sphere, fail to notice.

He uses the example of water into wine:

God creates the vine and teaches it to draw up water by its roots and, with the aid of the sun, to turn that water into a juice which will ferment and take on certain qualities. Thus every year, from Noah's time till ours, God turns water into wine.

Lewis argues that the miracle of Jesus turning water to wine at Cana has only half its effect if we are simply convinced that Jesus is God. To have its full effect, we must experience that sense of divine power every time we see a vineyard or drink a glass of wine.

Today we will come to the communion table where the ordinary bread and grape juice serve as a means of communicating God's grace.

Again, we relive and remember that Christ sat at the Passover table with his closest friends and said, Take this bread and eat it – it is bread broken for you.

When he took the cup he said Take and Drink the cup of salvation, the blood of the new covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

When we eat this ordinary bread and drink the cup we are bridging the gap between human and divine. It is a simple act, carried out repeatedly in the course of our lives.

If we experience communion only in the human sphere, we are depriving ourselves of an opportunity for closeness with God.

When we take the bread or drink the cup, we are accepting the invitation to join Jesus at the table.

When Jesus tells his disciples, “those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel will save it” he is talking about the ability to let go of what you know for something greater.

If we never let go, if we keep trying to control everything, we will be firmly rooted in the human sphere.

If we are able to move into the realm of God, trusting that God’s power is greater than any we can imagine, we will free ourselves of our human bonds.

When Jesus says, “Get behind me Satan” he is urging Peter to loosen the bonds to human context.

Satan holds us firmly in the human sphere – not wanting us to experience the divine.

We are now into our second week of Lent – moving closer to Jerusalem, knowing that the bridge between human and divine will be severed.

But just for a moment.

Because we also know that our forgiving, merciful God will take his son unto himself and that the Holy Spirit will be sent to help us search for the divine in our lives.

We know that Easter is coming, a time when we will bear witness to God’s greatest miracle – the resurrection.

Walter Brueggemann points out that “*There is not any way to explain the resurrection out of the previously existing reality. The resurrection can only be received and affirmed and celebrated as the new action of God whose province it is to create new futures for people and to let them be amazed in the midst of despair.*”

We know that we can get through Lent because Easter will be on the other side.

Just as we know that we can get through the dark, human places in our lives, because the Lord is on the other side.

As you approach this communion table, come seeking the divine.

Come, knowing that this simple bread and this simple cup represent a divine presence in your life.

Make a commitment this Lenten season to set your mind not *on human things but on all things divine.*