

Rev. George Arceneaux

1/7/2024

Epiphany 2024

Alright everyone, this morning's message is on the power of showing up. Today, is all about showing up. The fact that we're gonna have the pageant at 10am with people who will just show up to perform it, that we've got St. C.'s café in which everyone can show up for food, the theme I've got about Eliana, our baptismee who is gonna get baptized right after the pageant, is all about how even though she cannot articulate words, even though she cannot walk yet, even though she is just a baby she is a powerhouse because SHE SHOWS UP. And it's the same for you. You showing up is a BIG. DEAL.

And I'm gonna tell you why. And I'm gonna do it because, and I think this may be a me problem, I don't think we live in a world that does a very good job of naming why every single person matters.

Today's a day when we have a bunch of stories colliding. At the pageant, we'll hear the story of the Magi's arrival in Bethlehem to see the babe lying in a manger, for our Gospel this morning we have Jesus' arrival on the scene to be baptized and named the Son of God as we baptize Eliana, and we read the creation story as we hearken back to John's Gospel that says that in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

In many ways these are stories that can be read as different as could be; one where Jesus arrives as an infant, one as an adult, one as the light at the beginning of creation. A story of a miraculous birth, of an ordinary man baptized and named the messiah, and a story of the cosmos. And yet what they all have in common is the eruption of God into reality.

And of all our stories about what that means, Genesis 1:1 is about as good as it gets. God sees the earth, formless, void, deep and dark and says, “let there be light” and it was good.

What I love so much about that story of light’s birth, why I love it for today of all days, is that the power of that light isn’t that it does something. Light doesn’t have agency, it merely is. Light exists and it is good.

And our world doesn’t always do a great job of seeing the light that comes from each and every single life as good on its own. Because there are so many ways that our goodness can be compromised, so many ways that we can be told the exact opposite of what God said of that light that was created. We can be told we are bad because we get bad grades, or disagree with another person, or do a job that isn’t terribly glamorous. We live in a world where we are degraded for our beliefs and ideals, for our looks or our voices, for any number of reasons we live in a world where the message to us anything but “you are good”.

But that isn’t what God is about. And to quote my old Texan priest from elementary school, “God does not make junk.” You are not junk. Whatever you may say about yourself in fear or anxiety, out of anger or frustration that you are any less than a marvel, remember that you are created by that same force that brought all things into being. And that God does not make junk. What God makes is good. And that good is here everytime you show up. Just by existing here in this space, your light shines and fills this church sanctuary the same way the Eliana’s brightness illumines this place with her chortles and cries.

You are never too young and you are never too old to matter. If you just show up, and make space for others to show up too, I cannot overstate how wonderful it is. It’s wonderful in a way that the world doesn’t really relish. It’s not a joy that is quantifiable by a dollar amount or some grand achievement. This is another Sunday, not unlike so many that have come before. But like that light

that God created, that shone and shines in the darkness, this Sunday, THIS Sunday is good. And it's all the better not because necessarily of anything you've done (though thanks to those readers and altar guilders, it kind does make the space work a little easier and better) but this place this worship this Sunday is better not because of anything you've done. It made all the better because you're here. And that is so. So. Good. Thanks for showing up. Amen.