

Sunday, January 11, 2015  
Baptized into God's Pleasure  
Genesis 1: 1-5; Psalm 29, Acts 19: 1-7; Mark 1: 4-11  
© 2015 Roland G. Kuhl

I have told the story about when Lynne and I first started dating, she was not so sure our relationship was going anywhere because I was wrestling with whether I was called to be single.

The usual response has been laughter  
– but there is a story behind this.

I had dated others and even had been engaged once already, before Lynne and I met.

These relationships did not last  
– perhaps for a number of reasons.

It may be how I was viewed.  
I know when the other women on Lynne's floor at ORU heard Lynne was dating me, they responded with, "You're going out with Roly??"

Or maybe it was my singleness of focus and passion.

I knew I was looking for someone who shared the same passion as I did for Jesus in my life and, though there were others who had such a passion, for some reason, all I could ever be in their mind, was a friend.

And so, I became content that in my seeking to follow Christ with my whole heart and life, I may remain single.

And then Lynne popped into my life.

Was she a distraction?  
Was she one who shared a passion for Christ in which we might journey together in life?  
That's the context for my statement about my being called to be single.

As it turned out Lynne and I both shared a similar passion for Christ  
– and she loved me too!  
– to both of which our love letters attest.

Something similar may be the context for God's statement regarding Jesus at his baptism by John in Mark 1:  
"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Jesus was baptized into God's pleasure.

What do I mean by that?

God was pleased with Jesus, even before Jesus engaged in ministry.

Why then was God so pleased in him?

Perhaps it has to do with Jesus' passion for God,

For his willingness to identify with humanity in becoming one of us,

And entering the waters of baptism in order embrace his identifying with us.

We hear in a parallel text of a conversation between John and Jesus (Matthew 4: 14), wherein John expressed that he was the one who needed to be baptized by Jesus, rather than he baptizing Jesus.

Jesus responded saying, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."

This is a rather odd statement, but it expresses Jesus commitment in giving of himself completely to fulfill, not his own purposes, but God's purposes in his life  
– to live out a life marked by passion for God his Father, and for God's missional purpose.

That God's statement of his pleasure in Jesus, his Son, coming before Christ's engagement of ministry is something we ought to take note about our lives in our relationships with God as we follow after Jesus Christ.

When we reflect upon our baptisms and our identifying with the life of Jesus, we are baptized into God's pleasure as well.

God is pleased with us  
– even before we embark on ministry, or any duty in obeying God's ways in our lives.

In being raised to life with Christ in baptism, we are expressing our desire to live in harmony, in relationship with Jesus in our lives

- to live lives of passion following Christ and his ways,
- to exalt and worship him as Lord and Savior,
- to be marked by his life,
- by his purposes
- as he leads us in participating with God in God's redemptive mission in and for the world.

Such a passion for Christ in our lives, puts everything into different perspective  
– and into proper perspective.

This is what Paul was expressing in Colossians 1:15ff in speaking of Jesus:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven, and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

Living with a passion for Jesus, is to put Christ first in relation to all else we are or seek to be and do.

As we engage in courageous conversations

- specifically around sexuality in the coming days, weeks, and months;

The ultimate questions do not revolve around our perspectives or our thinking on heterosexuality or homosexuality

- but rather,
- **where is Christ in this?**

And as Jim Wallis reminded us as at the MC USA Convention - Columbus in 2009, there are other questions more pressing and nearer than the LGBTQ issue (and I might add, even here in our community)

- such as homelessness, poverty, racism
- or the prayer concern shared with us by Larry Sell, from his mentor Bob Ekblad, regarding the deplorable state of the American system of incarceration.

But even these questions

- can take on skewed agendas,
- unless we first begin with following Christ as he impassions us to reach out and engage real human beings whom Christ brings into our midst.

Otherwise, we are apt to engage such issues and questions on our own terms, opting for what is comfortable for us

- rather than to what God is calling us.

To engage, that which Christ brings to our attention, leads us to engage any issue in a different spirit, different attitude, when we engage it in light of our passion in following after Christ

- we seek to engage such issues in light of God’s agenda, God’s purposes.

Jesus was baptized into God’s pleasure, because Jesus already committed himself to be guided and directed by God’s will and committed himself to live in light of his relationship to God his Father.

The same is true of our calling  
– we are baptized into God’s pleasure as well  
– as we are baptized into Christ  
– no longer to live for ourselves, our own comfort, **but to live crucified with Christ (as Galatians 2:20 expresses).**

We are called to live into God’s pleasure with everyone whom we encounter and with every issue we are called to address.

I remember the story of Eric Liddell, who became a missionary to China in the early parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

But before he left his native Scotland, he competed for Great Britain in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris.

His sister thought his passion for serving Christ was distracted by his running  
– but Eric’s response to her is also something we need to hear, and experience, as we live out our lives:

“When I run, I feel God’s pleasure.”

He was not running for himself, nor for Britain – though Britain received the medal – he was running for God and to bring pleasure to God  
– and he felt God’s pleasure as he ran.

May we experience the same.

“When I work, I feel God’s pleasure”

“When I love my family, I feel God’s pleasure”

“When I spend time with friends, with my church community, I feel God’s pleasure”

And when you and I engage one another in difficult issues, engage in courageous conversation  
– may we engage in such a way that we feel God’s pleasure.

May our being baptized into God’s pleasure help us establish the right priorities in our lives.

For that is why we are baptized.

That is why Christ identified with us in his baptism

To reveal the purposes and pleasure of God to all creation.

Amen.