

Sunday, May 26, 2024
Trinity Sunday

Festal Evensong
4:00 pm

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A Sermon by

The Rev. Preston Gonzalez-Grissom, *Assistant for Children and Family Ministries*

on

Ezekiel 1:4-10, 22-28a; Revelation 4

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Evensong Sermon for Trinity Sunday, 2024

I come to you in the name of the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Friends, before we get started, I have to ask. We just heard two readings read, and there were lots of eyes. And there were wheels. And there were creatures. Wings, arcs. There's a bunch of different things. I wasn't the only one who found this weird, right? There's also creatures and heroes. Strange, super strange that the first chapter of Ezekiel, which we heard read first, is just a weird read.

Doctor Ellen Davis, who's a famous Old Testament theologian. She says that the Sick One is the single most awkward book in the entire Bible. Here we find in the very first chapter, Ezekiel, a priest or almost a priest. When Babylon, the mighty power of the day, raids his home Jerusalem, and takes many people captive, including him, and in this captivity he gets a vision.

From God. And it is, as Ellen Davis says, it's awkward. Ezekiel can hardly put into words what he has seen. He says he sees an image of these strange, heavenly, animal like creatures that in some way resemble Babylonian deities, but in other ways not really. It makes us wonder, is he having this sort of stress dream of the trauma of being dragged away to Babylon?

It's hard to tell what's happening at first, but these heavenly, animal like creatures are all around, and above them is a throne, and above the throne is one that he says is one that shines like the glory of God.

We don't hear this word, often. At least I don't. In regular conversation. Glory. Maybe we say the glory days. Or you may say it was a glorious performance, but that's not true of the Bible. It's said it's used often. Actually, in the Hebrew Scriptures, the word that we translate to glory is covered, and it means it means, wait, wait, or importance or reality.

The heavens declare the glory of God. And the Bible, the glory of God is the sign of the reality of God.

Christopher Southgate, who studies the problem of evil. Something I think a few of us in here would be interested in. He says the glory of God is a sign of the God in us, of God.

And when Ezekiel was describing this glory, he cannot even say it directly. It's too big. It's too much. He says, I saw one with the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God, the glory of God, the

godness of God, so big, so heavy, so profound. He has to explain it with multiple levels of separation. And when he sees this glory, he falls on his face and worship the weight of God pulls him to the ground.

Southgate notes that glory in the Bible is not good or bad. It's just the bigness of God. It's not God's beauty, it's just the bigness of the moment that draws you down. It's when we get big news that knocks us back into our chair. We know this reaction. We say this sometimes that if we have big news and we're calling on the phone, we'll say, are you sitting down?

So overwhelmed is Ezekiel that he lays down face first in worship. He lies down in the dirt because of the bigness of God, the godness of God, the glory of God. In this creates for him and for us what we might call the challenge of God. That the only proper response to God's godness is for us to feel little.

And maybe this is why we avoid it. We want to feel big. We want to feel in control. We want to feel like we can manage our own problems. We can manage the issues in our family, our companies, the world. Even if people would just get out of the way and let me handle it. We do not have time to be inconvenienced by the godness of God interrupting our plans.

But isn't this actually exactly what we're longing for? I do not think we want to walk out of this life clean. I don't think we want a far off God that cannot intrude on our lives or blow us away with the sheer magnitude of his presence. I think we want to experience the feeling of littleness. Of staring out at the ocean and feeling smaller than a grain of sand.

I think we want God to break into our lives, to make them something that only God can make. Don't we want God to surprise us? Don't we want to be humbled by the challenge of God?

In Ezekiel, we are reminded of what we already know that when we humble ourself before the goodness of God, he does not just drag us down, but lifts us up and sends us out right after our reading, right after Ezekiel falls down on his face in worship, God lifts him up and gives him a message and says, you will be my priest.

Friends, this is not just what God does. This is who God is.

He does not just bring us down and lift us up. He goes down and gets lifted up. The shock of the Christian story. It's not just that we should humble ourselves before a glorious God. It is that this glorious God humbled himself before us.

The one above the throne that Ezekiel mentions, he says it was one like a man, and it was Jesus Christ. The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God. The exact imprint of his nature. He is the visible image of the invisible God. Don't we want to follow this?

Jesus? Don't we want to be humbled? Don't we want to be raised to resurrected life?

So, beloved, let us humble ourselves before the glory of God, because the God who did not remain in the grave will not leave you on the ground. He will lift us up.

In the name of the father and the Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

