

Sermon

"I'm only human!" The last line of defence for those accused of errors in cheque book mathematics, misplacing the car keys, forgetting an evening meeting, overshooting the exit from the highway, reading the wrong lesson on a Sunday morning.

"I'm only human!"

A standard line that expresses frustration for our propensity to forget, misplace, daydream, and be unprepared. As such, it represents our humility and our vulnerability. A confession, as it were, of how we are prone to mistakes and miscalculations in life. And a promise of sorts, that you might well expect other mistakes and miscalculations in the future. After all, "I'm only human!"

But what of those times we hurt one another, or ourselves? What of those times when we destroy creation by our actions, or separate ourselves from God? Is it enough to simply say, "I'm only human!"? Are we supposed to expect sin and separation to be a part of life based on the knowledge that we are only human, and that being human means we will always fall short of perfection? Our choices will never be purely good, and that our actions will always be subject to doubt about our motives? Is it possible to trust ourselves and one another knowing that we are only human?

Well, it is possible to trust ourselves and each other, but not necessarily because we are only human. We are not only human - we share in the divine life of God through Jesus Christ. In fact, if we read the story of creation that precedes the account of Adam and Eve in Genesis from today's lesson, we are told that humanity was created in the image of God. How can anyone say that they are only human when they have the image of God within them? That would be like saying one of the works of Beethoven is only another piece of music or a Picasso is merely one more piece of art. Each represent the soul of the person who created it, just as each of us reflect the image of the loving God who created us.

But still, we are left with this story of Adam and Eve, how they were tempted by the serpent, and ate of the knowledge of good and evil. They did so in order to become like God, not being satisfied with being created by God and therefore only human. In their desire to become more than human, they separated themselves from the will of their creator, and in their separation lost some of their identity. They lost some of their humanity in the decision to become more

than human. Full humanity is found in relationship with God and with each other, and not in becoming our own gods and separating ourselves from God and each other. In the story of Adam and Eve, after partaking of the forbidden fruit, they knew they were naked, and made coverings for themselves. Not only were they separated from God, but now in their desire to become their own gods, they were separated from each other as well. Sin brings with it a new definition for humanity, we become only human, for we are separated from the one who created and loves us.

We proclaim that we are only human when we choose for ourselves, when we fail to consider how our action will impact upon others, including those close to us. We proclaim that we are only human when we fail to use the gifts we have been given not only for ourselves, but for others as well. We proclaim that we are only human when we act in anger and refuse opportunities for reconciliation. We proclaim that we are only human, that we are separated from God and from each other, when we mask the image of God that identifies us as His beloved.

In the gospel lesson today from Matthew, Jesus proclaims his humanity as well, a humanity that he shares with each of us. He is tempted as we are. Tempted to use whatever power he has to care for himself when he is hungry. Tempted to test God's love for him. Tempted to seize power over people rather than wait for it to come to him. Tempted to trust in himself, and not in the power that comes by being in relationship with the Father. Tempted to become his own god, like Adam and Eve.

But unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus faces his temptations and chooses to live in the fullness of his humanity by remaining one with the Father. By trusting that his hunger will be cared for by God, by choosing not to test his relationship, by allowing us to follow him freely, Jesus exalts the fullness of humanity that reaches its fullness by being in relationship, Jesus did not have to become his own god, he came to share in the divine, until at his resurrection and ascension, the human and divine would take their place with the Father in a home prepared for them.

We might well characterize our lives in this world as a wilderness journey, filled with temptations to become our own gods. We are surrounded with calls to seize control of our lives, insure ourselves against failure, conquer the world around us. In doing so we risk our relationships with creation, each other, ourselves. We risk our humanity. We are human by

virtue of our relationships. We become fully human as we become fully aware of the divine image that is part of each of us, and the relationship that image within us calls us to.

In his hunger, Jesus found himself being fed. In the loneliness of the desert, he found a confidence. In his anxiety over the future, he found a trust. In the wilderness, Jesus discovered a humanity prone to vulnerability and temptation, but also a relationship with the Father that gave him strength and hope.

In the days and weeks ahead, we will be hungry. Hungry for food, for love, for security. Will we find in our relationship with God the vision to see how He feeds us continually? We will be lonely, lonely in life. Will we have the confidence to know that even in the midst of that loneliness, God never leaves us alone? We can pray, offering ourselves through our words and thoughts, and listening in quiet. We will be anxious about the future. Will we have the trust to provide for ourselves and others in whatever way we can, and leave the rest to God? Will we discover the fullness of our humanity in our relationship with God and with all God's creation?

Know today that because of God's love for us in Jesus Christ, we are not only human. We are the children of God, born anew to a living hope through the resurrection from the dead. Know that because of Jesus Christ, we can claim to be more than merely human, expected to live in sin and separation. We can claim to be children of grace, free to love and free to live in God's love. We can claim our humanity because through baptism, it has been raised to the divine.