



### Epiphany 3 January 24, 2010

I don't usually wear these glasses. But for that matter I don't usually wear this robe either, so I figure that while I'm playing dress-up I might as well go for broke!

These are 3D glasses; I got them when I went to see Avatar last weekend. Which was of course a real delight. And I could well have gotten totally lost in the depth of the gorgeous imaginary world of Pandora, except that I kept taking off my glasses to see what the movie looked like without them. And as you might imagine, the magic was diminished. 3D technology creates the illusion of depth by recording the scenes from two slightly different perspectives, which the glasses bring into alignment. When I took them off, the story was just as great and I could still recognize the images, but they were blurry. Out of register.

So afterwards, pondering today's lessons, I found myself thinking that the season of Epiphany is like the 3D lens on the liturgical year. It's the time when the multiple perspectives on salvation history come into alignment, with all depth and vibrancy, and we are given glimpses, narratively speaking, of how things are really supposed to be look. People hearing themselves called beloved. Parties where the wine only gets better. And today's Gospel: justice for the poor, freedom for the captives, God's favor shared among all. The Jubilee of God; the apex of the prophetic vision for Israel. Can you see it for yourself?

A common denominator in all this clarity is the Holy Spirit, who always seems to show up just in time to reveal what is hidden in plain sight. When Jesus repeats the prophetic phrase "he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor," or when Paul writes "we were baptized into one body," the Spirit—who is credited with anointing the speaker and inspiring these words—that Spirit is merely illuminating the obvious. And the point of all this pointing out is not just so that we can see the light, but that we can be the light. If we have taken our baptismal vows seriously, then we know that Spirit of the Lord is upon us, and we too are anointed—literally—to bring good news to the world that God loves so passionately.

If that's the case, however, it's a pretty tall order we've been tasked with. And look around. To state the obvious, we're not there yet. The tragedy in Haiti has multiplied the woes of a people already burdened with poverty. Our prisons are overflowing, and we can't figure out how to share the blessing of health care with the most vulnerable among us. So it's hardly a surprise that claiming as immanent this promise of freedom, justice and abundance got Jesus in trouble. In the long term, and even in the very next passage, where you may recall that the skeptical Nazarene congregation attempted to throw him off a cliff.

And yet we are called to be like him. The 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish mystic Teresa of Avila put it something like this:

Christ has no body on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours. Ours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out upon the world. Ours are the feet with which he goes about doing good. Ours are the hands with which he blesses his people now.



And in deference to the current crowd, I might mention that ours are the Sunday Schools in which Christ teaches. I am here today as one among many guests of Trinity Church because this weekend you are helping to host the National Association for Episcopal Christian Education Directors. Like all of them, the part I play in the body of Christ is to teach, and I'd like to tell you what the view looks like from the perspective of this appendage. From classrooms and camps and youth groups, our Episcopal Church looks young, it looks creative, it looks diverse, it questions everything and it doesn't suffer fools. It is a church full of anger at all that is not yet, and wonder and at what could be. If we don't throw these young ministers off a cliff—or eliminate the jobs of those who teach them—it looks like a church that can (and indeed already does and will) practice freedom, justice and abundance.

That's my view from the world of ministry with young people; there are equally beautiful visions to be seen by those who minister with the poor, tend the earth, care for the sick and create worship. The letter to the church in Corinth reminds us that nobody's perspective on ministry is less important than another; and in fact we need them all if the vibrancy and depth of our multiple perspectives on the Gospel is to be proclaimed in 3D, as it were. When we tell each other of our particular glimpses of God's Jubilee, we are not so much sharing the specialized information we have—although that kind of teaching has its place—but rather describing the insight we are given by through grace. Such is the focusing work of the Holy Spirit—it gives us a view that is both individual in perspective and aligned in common vision.

This is a great day to honor the ministry of teachers—Gospel storytellers that you are—at Trinity and in the diocese of California and throughout the Episcopal Church. However, telling the story of what we've seen with the eyes of our heart is not the property of any one member of the body, neither teachers not preachers especially—but the birthright of all who are baptized into Christ. If the heavens can tell the glory of God, then so can we. The Spirit of the Lord is upon you; talk about what you have seen, bring good news.