

Wednesday, December 2, 2015

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests.*

***Luke 2:14***

I appreciate the insight of the sacramentalists into the word and sacrament. They suggest that Jesus intended, and the Apostles, led by the Holy Spirit, wrote in a way that wanted to include us in the worship of heaven, so that our eyes are opened in the preaching of the Word and the breaking of the bread. We come with a sense of expectation that God wanted to include us in the worship of heaven. What happens on earth in public worship is intended to correspond to the heavenly worship. Again, the liturgical crowd, I think, has got it so right and so we join our voices with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, who forever sing “Holy, holy, holy.” That is shown so visually in Orthodox churches with their icon screens; we are supposed to be seeing through them into heaven. These two dimensional pictures are intended to help us see beyond this world and into the world that is veiled because we are part of it.

When we go to church, we leave earth and we enter in the Spirit into heaven, like John does in Revelation, when he wrote, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” As we come into God’s house and join with the angels, we sing God’s praise and confess our sins. Entering Heaven, we are prepared to hear God’s words. Church worship and the sacraments are about much more than communal worship, they are transcendent. All worship is intended to be not only communal, but transcendent—that is we have fellowship with God. God is there and it is God who speaks to us, ultimately, not the pastor. It is God who gives the message and God who writes it on our hearts. It is God’s glory that we come to sing and praise. Seeing whatever we see of God’s goodness and glory, it is our delight and our pleasure to stand on our feet and sing His praise and then to bring our broken lives and world before Him. This is a heavenly thing, and if we miss the heavenly aspect of it, we have missed a “Big Deal.”

In some churches, the choir is behind the congregation or behind a screen. The screen may be slotted and we can only sort of see the choir, not their faces. The choir, who are dressed differently than we are, leads us and we join them. That’s like the liturgy pointing us to God. When we get to go up at Easter and sing the Hallelujah Chorus with the choir, we get to join the angels and the heavenly choir.

*Dear Lord, As we worship this Christmas season, open our eyes to see glimpses of heaven in the message, the singing and the prayers. Let us join with the company of heaven to praise You for the gift of Your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Rev. Lucky Arnold**