

YORKMINSTER PARK REFLECTS

Friday, October 16, 2015

A Reflection from David A Dorapalli

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Genesis 1:1-2 (NRSV)

The opening verse of the Bible is indicative of God's creation of time, space and matter. These are basic categories of human existence, and they exist as the framework of the world in which we live. There are different attitudes to the stewardship of time in different generations. It is essential to understand our presuppositions, and to acknowledge that it is not possible to speak on the stewardship of time without an erstwhile commitment, or a particular perspective of time.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NRSV)

The Christian faith takes time seriously. It is God who creates time, and secondly, time is the context in which God reveals himself, and participates in time especially in incarnation. In Judeo-Christian thought, there is one world whose history begins at one point and which moves towards an end, and God's purposes are worked out in time, leading to the eternity with God. Time belongs to God and is filled with a sequence of events with purpose, meaning and destiny.

Time as Relational

Time, for St. Augustine is not an absolute. Time is real and present. He finds the most satisfying answer in terms of relationships – not the external relations of bodies, but instead the internal relations of the soul. Time is essentially a process of mental comparison. It is with the mind we measure time. We are able to know time precisely because it is a capacity of the person, a function of the soul. His interpretation of time is consistent with Einstein's relativistic view of time. Just as there is no space without an object, so too there is no moment without an action. Time is the form and shape of our actions and we must talk of time for whom.

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Exodus 20:8 (NRSV)

Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even in plowing time and in harvest time you shall rest. Exodus 34:21- 21 (NRSV)

And, just as space is filled with creatures and matter, time was filled with days; six days for work, and one Sabbath day. Theologian Brian Edgar says that Sabbath was a time to be rather than to do, and this time was always of greater significance. It was a special day of God's creation. It was a day of rest, not because of exhaustion; but a rest-day in which God appreciated his creation.

This time of resting-in, and appreciating the world, and its creator was to be equally important for children of Israel. Even in the busy times, the Sabbath was to be observed. It was a provision from God incorporating the principle of rest and the appreciation of God, humanity and the creation.

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath Mark 2:27 (NRSV)

However, the significance of Sabbath takes on a new meaning in the ministry of Jesus. It meant a revolution of the understanding of time. In the Old Testament, the idea of Sabbath can be paralleled to the idea of tithe. Just as tithe represents a certain proportion of material possessions being dedicated to God, Sabbath represents the use of time for God. Jesus radicalizes the two concepts. Jesus could not affirm a theology of the tithe, as it was practiced then, because it implied a misunderstanding of the call of God on the entire resources of the disciples. Jesus could not suggest in any way that it was enough to offer ten percent to God while retaining ninety percent for oneself. His claim was on everything. In the same way with Sabbath – there cannot be the merest suggestion that only one part of the week belongs to God. The reality is that all times are God's times, and the Sabbath is to permeate every part of life. Every day is an opportunity to acknowledge God.

Time and Wealth for Others!

A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; 25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! Matthew 10:24-25 (NRSV)

Jesus refers to the community of his disciples as 'his household'. So, we imagine also the tasks and responsibilities of our church-life as "housework": ordinary things as preparing meals, washing dishes, paying bills, and taking care of others, which involve both time and energy. Whether it is Lord's Supper, baptism, or preaching, it is a kind of housework in many ways. And, housework by its very nature is repetitive. There are a lot of common tasks that disciples must perform with diligence especially caring for the others. Disciples do the kind of things that they saw Jesus doing. Therefore, they will also not escape the difficulties that beset their teacher, Jesus. Enemies will slander just as they slandered Jesus. But they must fulfill the call fearlessly, and at the same time be keenly aware of the real harm.

But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others. Luke 11:42 (NRSV)

This verse construes loving God in terms of proper use of wealth. "Love of God" which the Pharisees are said to neglect refers most likely not to emotive affection, but specifically to concrete actions that demonstrate piety. Jesus denounces their vigorous cultic piety which is not accompanied by justice to the others; the poor, widow, and orphan. We learn that sharing our wealth is an expression of justice and Love!

Therefore it becomes important for us to ask God to help us with wisdom and strength as we partake in the great ministry by sharing our resources of wealth labor, and time.