

The Christ In The Common [Deeper Sheet 8.2.09]

Exodus 25 finds God telling Moses, “Let the people make me a house that I may dwell in their midst.” In painstaking detail the chapters that follow describe how God’s dwelling is to be built. Certain places were to be sacred. There were to be sacred garments, sacred emblems, sacred offerings, and even sacred anointing oil. The word *sacred* comes from the Hebrew word “*kadosh*” meaning holy, set apart, or consecrated. In the ancient world, there were two realms: the sacred and the common. Distinguishing between these two realms was very important. We get the word *profanity* from the word *profane*, which in Greek means *to cross the threshold*. To cross the threshold was to take something sacred and to treat it as common.

Jesus consistently challenged this way of understanding the world, a fact that was constantly putting him at odds with the religious system of his day. To the religious it appeared that Jesus and his disciples profaned the sacred. At the center of this religious system was the temple in Jerusalem. It had become the epicenter of Jewish reality. It was thought that at the temple in Jerusalem God’s presence met the earth in a way that it didn’t anywhere else. Yet Jesus made statements like “One greater than the temple is here.” Or “I will destroy this temple and raise it again in three days.” When Jesus breathed his last breath, the temple veil—the holiest of space behind which only the high priest was allowed—was torn in two. The barrier was gone; people could get in. And also: God could get out.

The symbolism of this wasn’t lost on Jesus’ followers. They began to understand that each person’s body was God’s temple. It was a giant shift in how people understood reality. The sacred was now in the common, the everyday. For us, listening to a sermon is about waking up to the presence of the Christ in the common. We gather in this place and listen to a sermon, not to find God here but to regularly remind ourselves that God can be found here and everywhere else.

In Genesis 28, Jacob spends the night in the middle of the desert and dreams a dream in which he sees a ladder reaching from the heaven to the earth. He sees angels ascending and descending the ladder. Upon waking he says, “Surely the Lord was in this place and I did not know it.” We listen to sermons in order to, like Jacob, wake up to God’s presence in the most unlikely places. When this awareness begins to work on us, it becomes harder and harder to make broad, sweeping generalizations and dismiss entire groups of people that are different from us. It becomes more difficult to ignore and marginalize others, no matter how different they are, because Christ is in that encounter.

When have you caught glimpses of the Christ in the common?

What kinds of things prevent us from being aware of Christ’s presence in our midst?

In what places/parts of your day do you least expect to encounter God?

Waking up to God has less to do with what we see and more to do with how we see. It’s a matter of perspective. What do you think might help you to see the same old things differently?