

What Do These Three Have in Common? February 6, 2021

Growing up, my family played a lot of board games.

Tribond – the game that asks, “What do these 3 things have in common?”

A few easy examples:

-Rome, Paris, Berlin

-mail, shoe, lunch

A few harder examples:

-a tent, a baseball, a piece of trash

-a shoe, a person, South Korea

-USS Edwards, a snowstorm in Florida, a Hula hoop with a nail in it

You can buy Tribond, but even if you don’t want to, you have the chance to play every week in church! The Old Testament, New Testament and Gospel texts are chosen because they go together somehow: maybe similar themes, maybe one references another. These selections make up the Revised Common Lectionary.

Today, they hit the nail on the head – LOTS in common.

What do these three texts have in common?

1. Supernatural display of God’s power

- a. Isaiah: I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs [angels] were in attendance above him; each had six wings.
- b. 1 Corinthians: [The risen Jesus] appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time.
- c. Luke: Simon and the fishermen caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

2. Unworthiness

- a. “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”
- b. Last of all, as to one untimely born, [Jesus] appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
- c. Peter: “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish.

3. God’s love and mercy

- a. The seraph touched my mouth with [the hot coal] and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.”
- b. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain.
- c. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid.”

4. Call to discipleship, to spread the news of God's goodness
 - a. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"
 - b. So we proclaim [the grace of God] and so you have come to believe.
 - c. "From now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Really cool stuff!

Example for us

- God comes to us, whether in a vision of God himself in a massive temple, or in a bunch of slimy fish. We see God.
- We doubt and we question ourselves.
- God says, "You are worthy. You are loved."
- And we are transformed and live into our call to spread this love of God with others.

That was the story for Isaiah, Paul, fishermen; and that is the story for us. In fact, that is, by my lights, why we come to church.

-to encounter God

-to have a safe space to doubt and question, even ourselves

-to hear the reassurance of God, "You are loved"

-and to be sent out into the world changed, ready to tell other and ready to love and serve

I'll close with a portion of a poem by Rumi, which follows this same path, this same story, about seeing God and our response (of doubt, reassurance, and proclaiming).

Each Note

God picks up the reed-flute [that is the] world and blows.

Each note is a need coming through one of us,
a passion, a longing-pain.

Remember the lips

where the wind-breath originated,

and let your note be clear.

Don't try to end it.

Be your note.

I'll show you how it's enough.

Go up on the roof at night

in this city of the soul.

Let *everyone* climb on their roofs

and sing their notes.

Sing loud!

Jalal al-Din Rumi. "Each Note." From *The Essential Rumi*, translated by Coleman Barks (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995), 103.

Amen.