

I come to you in the name of one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

By a show of hands, who here has been born again?

Every single baptized Christian here today should have their hand held high.

Being born again is not language that we typically are comfortable with in the Episcopal Church. This phrase, "born again," conjures images of revivals, of charismatics, of evangelicals, not of the Episcopal Church. In some ways, I wonder if we disassociate ourselves from this phrase because of the connotations around it, we don't want to be associated with that "other" type of Christian.

Tell me if this is the image you see when you hear the phrase "I'm born again!"

Well, there's no need to be nervous  
I'm not dangerous anymore  
Yeah, I cleaned up and found Jesus  
And he's waiting at the door  
Now here's a leaflet, try to read it  
You have always been a friend  
But when you see me next  
Won't recognize the person that I am, I'm Born Again

That's the opening verse to the song, "Born Again" by the band Saint Motel. This song was written to evoke the following sentiment by the artist: "I think the idea of getting born again is ridiculous, but it's also hopeful, which I think is good. The song rides both sides; it's not taking a stand, it's more like a perfect dichotomy. At one point in your life it's a great idea and the second you think about it, it becomes a horrible idea."

As Episcopalians, we're Christian elitists. It's ok to admit it, and it has been helpful at times (our richness of liturgy, commitment to liturgical seasons, the common lectionary), but sometimes our elitism gets in the way of experiencing the fullest expression of God, the

fullest expression of Church that we could be, because we don't want to be associated with those "other" Christians.

I think this is one reason why the Presiding Bishop's sermon at the Royal Wedding last weekend was so refreshing and has resounded so loudly across the globe. Here is a man that represents a church that is known for its elitism (American, Educated, Wealthy, White) fully embracing the role of Chief Evangelism Officer, fully embracing the role of bringing the word, the Good News, to as many as possible, fully embracing the challenge of reviving the Episcopal Church, inspiring us to stand up and shout "Amen!" and not just with our eyes.

And he embraces this role with such fervor and joy and excitement for not just the Good News, but the way the Episcopal Church shares this Good News, because it is something that we should be excited about!

We are born again in our baptism, we are born again in the power of water and the Spirit, we are born again in our commitment to following Christ when we seek confirmation to take on the responsibility for our own life in faith, acknowledging all of the work that the community has done for us up to that point and will continue to do. We are born again, and this is the moment in history, this is the moment in our church, where we need to embrace this reality fully and exclaim to our neighbors that this place, St. John's Cathedral, this church, the Episcopal Church, is a source of love, a source of joy, a source of life, that is open to all, welcoming of all, affirming of all, loving of all, and inspiring to all. We have to embrace this moment of a fearless leader who cannot help but share a message that

resonates with anyone who hears it, and commit ourselves to living into the fullness of our faith as those who are born again.

So, how do we do that?

We must trust in what has been given us. Trust in the relationship between God, our creator, and us, the creation. Trust in the life that has been given for us, the teachings left for us, the knowledge exposed to us, through Jesus Christ, God's only son. Trust in the continual presence of the Spirit that enables us to be born again, that stands alongside us as the advocate, who embraces and empowers us to fully live into the work we are called to. Our sense of oneness with God, our sense of oneness in this creation, connected to God through Christ, connected to God through the Spirit, must be modeled after the same oneness that we see present within God expressed in the Trinity.

It is this sense of oneness that must fill us with hope, fill us with faith, that as we shake off those shackles that keep us firmly planted to the pews, shackles of embarrassment, shackles of elitism, shackles of doubt, shackles of wondering "wait, what exactly is the Trinity and how does that work?!", and embrace the call to speak boldly the faith that we have, the Good News we can't help but share. We have to speak boldly in proclaiming, "Here am I; send me!"

If we embrace our identity as being born again, in water and in spirit, if we embrace our identity of being one with God, a God that is best experienced in the fullness of the Trinity, then we could do worse than live into that moment where we experience our rebirth, where we have the opportunity to experience the Trinity in its fullness in this place and time.

Trinity Sunday then seems like a perfect day to talk about the call we receive in our baptism and the commitment that we as a community take on every single time a baptism happens amongst us.

Our baptismal covenant begins with the questions and answers about our faith in the Trinitarian expression of God that we celebrate in our tradition. Do you believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ the Son of God, in God the Holy Spirit? This is where we accept the reality of one God, expressed in the dynamic and active reality of the expressions of the Trinity. I see the Trinity actively engaged in our world, because we are actively engaged in the world. The Trinity allows us to see the active presence of God in this world. Our way of knowing and being known by God. Our way of (at least trying to) understand the why of our faith, the why of sharing our faith, the why of making disciples. The Trinity, for me, is really about a relational understanding of God, Son, Spirit, a relational understanding that speaks not only to our understanding of God as one, but our understanding of why we are creation, and what we're supposed to do with that.

And then, we are presented with the following set of questions that put to us that challenge of being actively engaged in the world, and how that must look like as people of faith:

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the Prayers?

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and , whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

We respond to each of these questions: I will with God's help. The God we have just proclaimed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The God that we recognize in the transformative experiences of connection to the Trinity. The God, in expression of Trinity, that is active and dynamic in this world, strengthening us, empowering us, humbling us, healing us, forgiving us, loving us. This is the God that will help us tackle each of these commitments we make as we die to sin and are born again through water and Spirit.

Well, there's no use trying to fight it  
Cause you fought it long enough  
It starts with lies and leads to hate and hate to sex and sex to drugs  
Here's the bad news for the sinners  
And the solace for the saints  
When you break it down, the two of us are really just the same, I'm born again.

There is truth in this song that holds up that razor-thin edge of expressing our born again faith and the inauthentic manner of living that many who proclaim this phrase as the sole-identifying mark of their personhood are constantly putting out into the world. We are called to boldly proclaim "Here am I; send me!," because we experience the reality of being born again in our baptism, of being reminded of our born again status in every baptism we attend, as we share in proclaiming the baptismal covenant, in proclaiming that with the help of the God we have just professed, we will strive to spread the Good News and make this world a better place for everyone in it because of our expression of faith, not in spite of it. I am born again and I hope that you too can proclaim that identity in all that you do.

Amen.