

Play Nice
Psalm 146 & 1 Kings 17:8-24
June 6, 2010

- I. In the ancient days of ol', long before there was Saturday Night Live, there was another program that set the comedic tone of the nation; The Rowan & Martin Laugh-In. Let's scare the kids and everyone who remembers join me in the chant.
"Sock it to me -- Sock it to me -- Sock it to me -- Sock it to me."
- A. One of the great stars of that show was the comedian Flip Wilson.
- B. On the show Flip created the role of Reverend Leroy, who was the minister of ***the Church of What's Happening Now!***
New parishioners were wary of coming to the church as it was hinted that Reverend Leroy was a con artist. (How prophetic.) Flip popularized such catch phrases as "What you see is what you get," and "The devil made me do it!"
- C. Yes, whenever Rev. Leroy got caught doing anything wrong, his saving statement was "the devil made me do it."

- D. The phrase later became quite popular among other clergy, such as Jim Baker and Ted Haggard and even popular with some politicians.
- E. Yes, it is good to have the devil around to take responsibility for all our misdeeds.
- F. But, what about when we do something good?
For that we're always very eager to take the credit,
but the reality is that we should be saying...
"God made me do it."

II. Yes, God made me do it.

- A. Check out the psalm we just read.
Happy are those whose help is in God,
who made everything;
who keeps faith forever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
 who gives food to the hungry.
God sets the prisoners free;
 God opens the eyes of those who cannot see.
God lifts up those who are bowed down;
 God loves the righteous.
God watches over the strangers;
 and upholds the orphan and the widow...

B. It says that God does it, but we are the tools of God's good work.

1. God used Moses to free the captives.
2. God used Gandhi and Martin Luther King to bring justice to God's children.
3. God uses Bill Gates to try to end Malaria.
4. God uses us.

C. We may be the instruments of God's action, but it is God that gets it all goin'. Pay close attention to that last line of that psalm.

1. God watches over the strangers; and upholds the orphan and the widow.
2. Now that's just what was happening with our first reading from the book of Kings, where ol' Elijah goes and prays for the healing of the widows son.
3. But ol' Elijah, he thinks this healing the son is all his idea and he's got to go convince God that God should do something.
4. So where does Elijah think that his loving concern for this woman and her son came from anyway?

5. Where does he think the idea that he might ask for a healing came from?
6. The whole thing started with God.

III. It's the same for us, the lure to love, the lure to beauty, to harmony, visions of peace and justice these all are the handiwork of God.

A. We see the manifestation of the Spirits inspiration every day.

1. We saw it in Mother Teresa's compassion
2. Martin Luther King's justice
3. The love of a parent for their children
4. The care given to the non-humans in our lives
5. The beauty of art and music and poetry
6. Even our own suffering at the sight of the suffering of others or the tragic destruction of God's creation and creatures.

IV. Yet, in our world God's lure is either made possible or it is defeated by human hands.

- A. Yes, we are the hands of God, but there are those who work for another master.**
1. There are those who see no value in the lives of others, accept as cogs in a machine.
 2. There are those who see God's creation and God's children as only a means to an end, which is usually their own self gratification.
 3. There are those who think greed is a virtue.
 4. There are those who find the only unethical thing about lying is getting caught.
- B. Yes, there are clearly folks in very high and low places, with very great power who clearly serve another master and who will even lie about that.**
- C. These folks never learned the basic lessons of pre-school.**

V. Some of you are starting to figure out that I love the title of the book, “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten” by Robert Fulghum.

It’s just a great title.

But I think another book title may be more accurate.

And that title would be,

“All I Really Need to Know I learned in Preschool.”

A. Someone recently commented to me that, “Sometimes it seems like Jesus point of everything in the New Testament could be summed up by saying, ‘Be nice to each other.’”

B. My simple response was, “Yup – all the laws and commandments in the Bible can probably all be reduced to the simple pre-school lesson of ‘Play Nice.’”

C. If we just could learn how to do that there would be real hope for the world.
Real promise.

- D. Of course to play nice we have to learn some really important lessons, like:
1. how to share,
 2. how to respect one another,
 3. how to be fair,
 4. and merciful and forgiving.
- E. So not to put too much pressure on Nancy McKee and all she does with the preschool, but it is up to all of them.
It's up to them...
to save the world. No pressure.
- F. And if all the preschools in the world truly succeeded in their mission; we might even see aliens;
Yup! Aliens.
- VI. Steven Hawking the famed cosmologist and physicist recently did a show on the Discovery Channel and in the second show he addressed the possibility of ---
Aliens.

- A. Dr. Hawking says that the probability that there are other intelligent life forms in the cosmos is almost a certainty.
- B. But, he suggests that perhaps we should not be in such a hurry to meet them.
The reason being that they may be nomadic warriors taking over planets.
- C. Now, given my faith that the arc of the universe is towards goodness, and that our evolution is towards a more loving species; I'm going to have to disagree with Dr. Hawking and I'm going to speculate that the aliens are already here and have been, possibly since our beginning – as they, of course, are capable of time travel, or of at least transporting instantaneously to different parts of the cosmos via worm holes;
as Dr. Hawking tells us is possible.
- D. It is also my speculation that, being the wise and loving creatures they have evolved to become, they will not want to reveal their presence until...
until we all have attended to God's urging and learned to play nice.

E. If I was an alien from another world, I think that I would want to wait to come out of the closet, until I was sure nobody was going to shoot at me, or treat me like a criminal and I'd wait until I was pretty sure that they would treat me with the same kind of love that they treat their loved ones.

F. Now how would I know, as an alien, when it was time, when it was safe, to come out of the closet? Well, I would simply take a look at how the earth people treat the aliens already in their midst.

You know, the ones that they now call illegal and only want around for the purposes of exploiting their labor.

1. When it comes to immigration, we have not learned to play nice.
2. In fact, we sound like a whinny preschooler crying, "mine, mine, mine."
3. When it comes to immigration we cling with outstretched claws to the illusion of "mine."

4. Do we really care about what Jesus taught us or do we think he just joking or maybe delusional. All that stuff about loving our neighbor, doing unto others as we would want them to do unto us. Not clinging to possessions.
5. We just don't play nice.
6. We forget or ignore those lessons we learned in preschool.
 - a) how to share,
 - b) how to respect one another,
 - c) how to be fair,
 - d) and merciful and forgiving.
7. As long as our views on immigration are based upon defending what is mine; rather than on "Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you;" then God's realm will not be complete – and we won't see any Aliens; at least not the ones from out there.

VII. But is God really important in all this?

Do we really need God to tell us to play nice, can't we just figure this out for ourselves?

Well apparently not.

- A. The reality is that it is God who is telling us to play nice.**
1. God's been sending us prophets and teachers for thousands of years.
 2. Rumor has it that God even sent God's only begotten child.
 3. And by golly, God is still speaking.
- B. But, we like children, just want to go our own way and live in a child's fantasy world of "mine."**
A world where we have learned to find our identity in what we possess -- things, power, status;
rather than seeing that at our most real level who we are is simply --
a unique temporal focal point, comprised of interrelationships within the eternal Matrix that is God.
- C. We are a self aware reflection of God.**
- D. More accurately, we are part of God and the illusion that we are a separate entity defined by what we possess, by what is 'mine,' that illusion is exactly what keeps us from playing nice.
Defending what is mine.**

- E. The socially constructed illusion that reality is grounded in the self is the basis for the theology of self.
The self is god and self-ish-ness is the sacred ethic.
- F. Yes, Dorothy, the only way we will learn to play nice is to become aware of God; aware of God's presence in all that is.
- G. I hope I don't lose too many of you in my closing here, but ...
Each of us is like a single note within a chord in a magnificent symphony.
You are free, within limits to set your own duration, that is how long and loud your note will sound, and you're free to move up or down the staff to be either in harmony or discord with other notes playing at the same time.
Without you, the symphony would not be what it is, but without the symphony and all the other notes around you, you are meaningless and of no value.
But the symphony is in process and right now the note that is you, is being played, making the symphony into what it eternally has been and eternally will be.

- H. And the beauty of the music all depends on
if we learn to play nice.
- I. That's all God asks of us, just...
to play nice.
AMEN.