



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast

August 11, 2024

“Let’s Start With: What is the Gospel?”

*“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked.
(see John 2-4)*

A few months ago our Sunday Blasts began – trying – to answer the question “What is the Gospel?”

and for the rest of the summer season the Blasts and Sunday sermons will return to that topic. To set the stage for those discourses, I will add an allegory and reflection (with a few modifications) by Pastor Matt Laney, co-pastor of Virginia Highland Church UCC of Atlanta Georgia.

An Allegory: A university professor visited a respected Zen master. As the Zen master prepared tea for his guest, the professor proudly shared everything he knew about Zen.

The master poured the tea. When the professor’s cup was filled, he kept pouring. The professor watched the tea spill onto the little table and onto the floor. “Stop! Can’t you see it’s full?” the professor blurted.

“You are the same way,” the Zen master said. “You are full of ideas. How can I teach you Zen unless you first empty your cup?”

Nicodemus, a learned Pharisee, came to Rabbi Jesus to talk theology. Basically, Jesus said, “Your head is too full. If you want to see the kingdom of God, you need to start all over.” In other words, empty out all your preconceptions of God and the Gospel in order to let me, Jesus, in!

It’s possible that whatever we learned about being “born again” needs to be dumped out as well. Being “born again” or, more accurately, “born from above,” is not what we think. In fact, it’s about emptying our cup of earthly thinking and human concepts...to make room for Jesus’ teaching and God’s grace.

I’ve often wondered if our worship of God is mostly worship of our ideas about God, which would be tantamount to making idols of our ideals. Like wind, God cannot be captured or contained. God is above and beyond even our best thoughts. Maybe Christianity will be born again when our minds, and worship spaces, are emptied.

[note: this reflection can be found at https://www.ucc.org/daily-devotional/daily-devotional-for-small-group-discussion-born-again-is-not-what-you-think/?inf_contact_key=4a48313fb4f80c115fc248005dcc1fd8b7af0999dac2af6212784c39e05d2aef]

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- **Special Announcement: Raquette Lake Chapel’s Annual Meeting will be held after service on August 25, 2024. All are invited!**

Raquette Lake Chapel History will continue in the next Sunday Blast.

Prayer Box: *pray for healing and comfort for Margo and Bill, Justin and his family, Danielle, Debbie, John C, Joe, Holland, Steve, Gail, John H, Mia, Patti, Florence; pray for all those suffering from severe weather; pray for first responders; pray for an end to the divisiveness our country; pray for peace in the Middle East and Ukraine.*

Lord, hear our prayers!