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What's Wrong with Being Human?

After a long spell with no rain, the thunderstorm we were having was welcomed. My family watched the huge drops of rain fall on our thirsty lawn and on the struggling dogwood trees that I had planted earlier in the spring.

Then out of soothing rhythm of the rain broke an off-beat sound much louder and out of sync with the melody we enjoyed. With this single clap of thunder the house lights went out and all of the symphony-goers were in the dark. We “flicked our Bics” to light our home and there we sat singing children’s songs in the dark.

It was late in the evening when the power company arrived to work on our part of the problem. They explained that a lightning bolt estimated at 1.5 million volts had hit the power grid in our subdivision. As a result of the extensive damage to our transformer, it had to be replaced. This meant a small tracked machine and a three-man crew would need access through our yard to get to the fried transformer to replace it. I was happy to oblige them.

At almost 10PM the crew was ready to move their equipment down to the work area, and I was about to bid them good night and head off to sleep, when one of the workers told me that the three of them had worked together on the same crew for almost 30 years. I was astounded that in an industry with so much employee turn-over these three had worked together for so long. It piqued my curiosity, so I asked them if I could hang out awhile and watch. They agreed and then authoritatively the lead man on the crew said, “You can watch but you must stay out of the way, and if we say get back or move, you must do so quickly.”

I agreed to the parameters they set and then spent the next 5 hours fascinated by the work they were doing and the inner workings of an electrical transformer. But more than that I was fascinated by how well they worked together. These three men had such a close relationship that they did not even need to talk to one another to get the job done. They knew each other so closely that they functioned as one.

I sat on the rubber tracks of their tractor and watched with the excitement of a little kid. I was watching the Trinity right in front of me. Seeing how these three men related to each other was a picture of the Father, Son, and Spirit. They even reached out through the night and drew me into their relationship. They joked with me and let me participate in the work they were doing. I got to loan them a shovel and help take down a part of a fence that was blocking access to the work site. They included me in what they were doing and in their relating with one another.

I was having the best time. They were just three very close human beings, and more importantly, that night they were *humans being*. They were just being themselves. They were comfortable and enjoying themselves. The lead man on the crew even told me that although they did not even need to talk to one another to get the job done, they did talk to each other because they were friends.

As the night wore on they finished up the job, and when the light on our deck came on, I knew that soon my new friends would be leaving and going on to the next job. Out in our cul-de-sac I

helped them load up their tools. By this time it was 3AM. We were shaking hands and they thanked me for helping them out and letting them use my yard to access the transformer, when all of the sudden, one of the men asked me the question I had dreaded all night. It was the one question I hoped would not be asked. He said, “What do you do for a living?” I panicked. I scrambled for something to say that would be true but not give away my occupation. Cornered and on the spot I said, “I’m a pastor.”

With those words everything we had shared that night ended. All three of them bristled and one man even corrected his posture as if he were not standing erect enough to be in the presence of a ‘man of the clergy’. In a flash the conversation turned superficially religious. Each of them became synthetic and not at all like the comfortable relational humans just being that I had befriended. They became plastic and fake and it broke my heart. Instantly I was excluded from the circle of friendship into which I had been drawn.

That is why I did not want to tell them I was a pastor. Because I knew it would most likely ruin all the fun we were having. Sadly, I was right. For hundreds of years religion has told people that it is somehow wrong to be human. The religion of man has taught us to be ashamed of who we are as human beings. Being human is not something to be loathed; after all, Jesus Himself is yet human. (1 Timothy 2:5)

God made us human. He created us and said “It’s good.” In Jesus Christ, that humanity has been perfected before the Father and as the vicarious human being, Jesus shares that perfection with each of us. While we participate in the divine life offered to us in Jesus, let’s remember that we can be ourselves everywhere. We can be ourselves at church. We can be ourselves in the company of pastors. We can even be ourselves with Triune God.

We are no more or less in the presence of God at church than we are at any other time. If we truly live and move and have our being in Jesus, then are we not always in His company? My prayer is that the Christian Church will recover the truth that humanity is good and being human is okay and that we are free to be human in Jesus in the Shared Life of Father, Son, and Spirit. It was Irenaeus who summarized the will of God the Trinity to share His life with us when he said: “the glory of God is man fully alive!”

~ Bill Winn