

Lia Scholl
Sermon 05-06-2018
Psalm 29, Romans 8:12-17
"God Is Bananas"

A minister gave her first children's lesson on a Trinity Sunday.
With a banana in her hands,
she greeted the children,
then peeled it and asked the children how many bananas she had.
They all agreed that she had one.

Then she carefully pressed her index finger into the top of the banana
and it neatly separated into three equal parts.
She asked the children, "is there still one banana?"
Some children thought yes and some thought no.
Then the minister launched into explaining that all three parts were equal
and had the same amount of "bananeness" as the one banana had before
she separated it.

She passed around the banana, and as the children ate their banana pieces,
the minister asked:

"Tomorrow morning when you have bananas on your cornflakes, what are
you going to think about?"

One three-year-old little girl said, "God is bananas!"

God is bananas.

No seriously. The Trinitarian idea of God is a hard one, isn't it? Father, Son,
Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Different gifts, different roles.

Did you know that the Bible never expressly talks about the Trinity?
That even THAT word,
Trinity, is not in the Bible?

And yet, throughout the New Testament, we have passages that talk about all three.

Like today's text.

The verses speak of God as parent, God as Son, and God as Holy Spirit.

We've spent weeks talking about diversity, haven't we?

Diversity in God—the Alpha and the Omega and everything in between.

Diversity in us, too.

Diversity in our roles and in our gifts, in our calling and in our abilities.

And last week, we talked about unity.

Not unity in terms of sameness,
but in terms of everybody being themselves,
and bringing wholeness.

Because diversity creates more possibilities
and that's how we shape tomorrow towards abundance.

That together we make a collective brilliance.

And in today's text we see who we are: God's children.

And free—no spirit of slavery, but a spirit of adoption—
God's WANTED children us.
And heirs in Christ.

All the glory that Jesus received, we will receive, too.

But let's get real.

This world does its absolute best to confound the idea that we are God's children—

that ALL of us are God's children.

There's no better example of the confounding of that message

than our *so-called justice system*.

As you all know, I was arrested on Monday.

I was arrested by the Capitol police of Raleigh.

Some new friends and I had a little sit-in

by the office door of Tim Moore, the Speaker of the House of North Carolina, loudly demanding change.

I was there to demand that our government remember that we are all God's children.

I was there to demand an end to the anti-immigrant rhetoric from our politicians,

to the fear running rampant in immigrant communities,

to the horrible conditions in for-profit detention centers,

and to the thousands of families who are being torn apart by anti-immigration enforcement.

I was there because my immigrant friends are afraid.

Whether citizen,

married to a citizen,

awaiting asylum,

or even a DACA recipient,

if you are "not from here," you are vulnerable to detention and deportation.

I was there in the crowd because I have visited Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia,

where ICE detainees from Winston-Salem are housed

with little legal representation and almost no due process.

The water runs black out of the faucets, and some days there is no water.

We sat down on the floor, sang a few songs "Everybody's gotta right to live," and chanted some chants: "What do you want? Justice! When do you want it? Now!" "Whose House? Our House!"

Now I've done court support,

visited jails and prisons,
bailed folks out,
and done the requisite ride-a-longs
that seem to be a privilege of the clergy.

But I've never been to arrested.

They put us in a van,
drove us to the Wake County Detention Center,
took our pictures and fingerprinted us.
They took away my belt and the shoelaces of my friends.

And then it got a little too real for me.

An innocuous question, "Where were you born?"
got me an interview with an ICE officer.

I was born 50 years ago in Tokyo, Japan,
where my father was a captain,
a pilot in the Air Force.

My friends were moved along to the magistrate, and I was alone with an
ICE agent.

He asked where I was born...

And I'm mostly fuzzy on the details...

Tokyo Japan, or was it Tachikawa-shi, Japan?

Still part of the Tokyo metropolitan area, but it makes a difference.

"Oh, you were born on a base?" he asks.

And I remember that somehow, no. I wasn't born on a base.

"Are you a naturalized citizen?" Well, no. Somehow the paperwork that
was required when I was really young wasn't necessary anymore.

Where were your parents born? Hmmm. Illinois and Virginia? Or was that
California?

Anyway. I should know the answers to these questions.

But I don't.

I was very young when I was born.

Then I mentioned my passport. "You have a passport?" he asked.
He looked it up. Everything seemed fine.
But then he fingerprinted me and took my picture,
and offered me the chance to make a phone call.
"Do I need to? Am I being detained?"

I don't have to tell you that the whole system is designed to
obfuscate,
confuse,
and create fear within us.

The message of our legal system,
whether immigration and control or regular law enforcement:
"You ain't shit."

That's what having your hands tied so you
cannot pull up the pants that are sagging
because they took your belt away tells you.

That's what standing behind glass
being talked to like a piece of dirt tells you.

That's what being told to "move here, move there.
Not there, but there" tells you.

That's what not knowing what is coming next tells you.

You ain't shit.

But that is not what the Bible teaches us.

The Bible teaches us that we are somebodies.
We are special.
We are children of the Living God
and we are infused with the very image of God.

And yet, we have found out more this week, haven't we?

More of the devastating facts relating to our immigration system...

Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a new policy that all border crossers would be prosecuted, and that the U.S. government would separate children from their parents during prosecution.

Get this, y'all. The government's been planning on housing them on military bases.

Our President said, "They look so innocent. They're not innocent."

Our federal government has lost track of 1475 immigrant children last year.

These children were placed in the homes of adult sponsors in communities across the United States. Some ran away. Others are just missing.

And oh, by the way, some of these children have been placed with traffickers—one of which made the children work on egg farms in Ohio, forced to work for six or seven days a week, twelve hours a day. The children were threatened with physical harm and even death, and the traffickers "used a combination of threats, humiliation, deprivation, financial coercion, debt manipulation, and monitoring to create a climate of fear and helplessness that would compel [the victims'] compliance."

Yes. We are children of God.

And so. Are. They.

This is the part of the sermon where I'm supposed to give hope.

But this is what I know: Their only hope is in us.

We are the only ones who can change this.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.
Amen.