

Where DO Babies Come from?

The Episcopal Church of the Resurrection

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Epiphany 2

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Have you ever experienced that odd “walking on eggshells” dissonance that happens when folks come together at a family gathering? That’s life in a nutshell, isn’t it? Families upon families doing their best to put their best foot forward throughout history.

Last week as many of you know Adam and I had the joy of being at the baptism of our newest granddaughter, Charlotte. To celebrate here is one of the best stories I heard that day from a delightful newer member of that particularly family gathering.

A young couple had a precocious six-year-old boy.

It seems that their little one was confused. One day he went to his Mom and asked:

Where do babies come from?

The mom got very thoughtful, and after a little pause she explained it this way.

Long, long ago, God created two people, and he named them Adam and Eve. And after a while Adam and Eve had some children, and then, after they grew up, they had some children, and then later on when they grew up, they too had a lot of children, and that kept happening for generation after generation till just six years ago God decided to bless your papa and me with a beautiful baby boy, and that was YOU.

Well, the mom’s explanation was pretty good, but it didn’t quite satisfy the little boy, so he went to his dad.

Dad, **where do babies come from?**

Well, the dad too got a wistful look in his eyes, and he sat his son down and explained it like this:

Long, long ago, when there was hardly anything around, a tiny bunch of teeny tiny cells called protoplasm started getting together in the vast dark ocean, and they joined together and joined together, and finally they turned into a fish, and later, after a long time, that fish got curious about what it would be to live on the land, and so the fish developed special gills so it could breathe on land, and little arms and legs so it could crawl on the land, and after a long, long time, that creature decided it wanted to stand up and walk, and later on to use tools in the new little fingers that were growing on his hands, and eventually these creatures turned into monkeys, and then into apes, and then one day they turned into humans like you and me, and that is where we all came from.

Well, this was an interesting story, but now the little boy was just plain confused, so he went back to his mom and told her what his dad had said. Now he wanted to know which story was right.

Well, the mom thought long and hard, and finally she said. Both of our stories are right. I was telling you about *my* side of the family, and your dad was telling you about *his*.

Let me now share with you one page of a book our Bible group will be studying in the weeks to come, Judy Cannato's **Field of Compassion: How the New Cosmology is Transforming Spiritual Life**.

Here is a slightly redacted explanation she offers to tell the story of creation from both a scientific and a Christian perspective.

"God's bestowal of grace began with time itself. It is interwoven in our history. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, all creation has been pressured from within to evolve. Inert matter evolved, becoming ever more conscious, until, at a particular moment in the concrete history of the world, self-reflective consciousness emerged in a species we call human.

The material universe that came into existence and was maintained by grace finally became aware of the grace that had been there all along, the self-communication of the Holy at the heart of all life.

In the Christian story, we locate this moment of evolutionary history in the person of Jesus, the Christ . . . an evolutionary first, a cosmic event that ushered in a new era of profound awareness of how intricately the Holy is woven into the fabric of our lives . . .

More than anything else, Jesus signaled a new consciousness – a new way of looking at God, self, and all others. This new consciousness crystallized in the image of the "kingdom of God," the here-and-now reality that he never tired of living and inviting others to enter (Sorin Books, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2010, p.).

Preacher Bet Blair puts it this way: "Phillip comes to his friend Nathanael and proclaims that he has found the one whom Moses wrote about, none other than Jesus of Nazareth. While we do not know what expression Nathanael had on his face when he responded, I think that it is safe to say that his response revealed a cynical sneer. "Can anything good come from *Nazareth* (Something Good Can Come from Nazareth, Sermons.com),).

After all, Nazareth was a poor town of anywhere from 200-400 people. Archeologists remind us that their homes were small, primitive hovels made of stone, and that garbage and excrement would have been regularly dumped into the alley ways.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Isn't this another way of saying, "Jesus is from *your father's* side of the family.?"

Answered Phillip: "Come and see."

Let's back it up. "The day before this encounter Andrew convinced his brother Simon Peter to come and check out Jesus. Then Phillip invited Nathanael. There were eight others who would become Jesus' inner circle, 12 in all. This was just the beginning. Soon there was 70 that comprised an outer circle. The net of redemption that was cast was large, even in those early days. Hundreds were soon following, by the end of the century half a million (taken from a sermon by Bret Blair, "Something Good Can Come from Nazareth, sermons.com)."

One of the key revelations in this new Jesus movement: **we are all from the same family!**

Our Abba Father loves us all, rather Jew or Greek, tax collector or fisherman, Gentile or Samaritan, male or female. I know it is obvious, but we need constant reminders: WE ARE ONE FAMILY!

Today Christians are being baptized and welcomed into the loving life of Christ in South America and Africa at ten times the rate of North America and Europe.

Sadly, it is well known that there is little church growth here in the United States, so, without using any disparaging words, we might lament the fact that we are seen by many as a culturally and spiritually impoverished nation.

To become great, to once again become whom we have always been meant to be, we need to be challenged and converted into a PART OF THE FAMILY known for our truthful decency, our richly generous way of living, and our compassionate way of seeing and living into the world as it is.

The good news for us is that we don't have to manufacture this way of life from nothing. We already live in a world of grace – God's self-communication, the pouring out of God's very self in and for the life of the world in his son Jesus.

And what does following the Jesus part of the family look like?

Well, for a start, Jesus consistently asks us to welcome the stranger.

In the gospel of Luke, he critiques the Priest and the Levite who walk by the stranger who had been robbed, beaten, and left to die.

He praises the Samaritan who gives everything to save him.

In the book of James he asks, what is the point of saying to another human being, "Go in peace, keep warm, be well fed, but do not supply for their bodily needs. What is the good of that?"

Can anything good come from Nazareth? Answered Phillip: "Come and see."

In a few minutes we gather for our Annual meeting to talk about our own family. This coming year we seek once again to boldly proclaim with our own lives and witness: ***What good can come out of the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection in Spokane Valley?***

Never disparage what good can come from a small country, a small town, a small church, or even a handful of courageous and loving disciples, gathered each week to follow the Lord.