



## Proper 27, Year C – October 3, 2010

Dear Baby Lord Jesus

### A Homily preached by the Rev'd Tara Livingston

I'd like you take a moment to let your imagination run. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and conjure up an image in your mind of Jesus. Allow his face to appear, his eyes, the shape of his nose and the tilt of his mouth. His hair, his shoulders, his hands. Note his posture, the way he smells and the expression on his face. Breathe. Breathe and pay attention to how this vision of Jesus makes you feel.

Now, picture Jesus again sometime in the future, may be next year, at your dinner table. Imagine the conversation – what are you talking about? What do you want to know about him? What questions are you asking?

In our book study we are reading a book by Brian McLaren called "A New Kind of Christianity, 10 questions that are transforming the faith. While I can't recount to you the book in its entirety the conversations at the book study have inspired me to share some of Brian's thoughts with the rest of you.

I'm now quoting him who is in turn quoting a movie called "Talladega Nights." "Dear Lord Baby Jesus," Ricky Bobby begins, "or as our brothers to the South call you, Hey-zeus, we thank you so much for this bountiful harvest of Domino's, KFC, and always delicious Taco Bell." Ricky Bobby continues to pray to "Dear Lord Baby Jesus" and "Dear Tiny Infant Jesus" asking the Lord to use his "baby Jesus powers" to heal his father-in-law.

His wife is quite disconcerted by this image of a still-infant Jesus. But for Ricky Bobby replies, "Well, look, I like the Christmas Jesus best. When you say grace, you can say it to grown up Jesus or teenage Jesus or bearded Jesus or whoever you want."

Someone else pipes up "I like to picture Jesus in a tuxedo t-shirt, 'cause it ways like, 'I want to be formal but I'm here to party too' 'cause I like to party so I like my Jesus to party.

One of Ricky Bobby's sons pipes in and declares that he likes to think of Jesus as "a ninja fighting off evil samurai" or someone who can kick anyone's behind whenever he wants.

Obviously this is a satirical and somewhat distasteful look at how some people think about Jesus. But in every comedy there is a grain of truth, a dose of reality otherwise it wouldn't be funny.

Dear Lord Baby Jesus...

Now, keeping this in mind, the way that humans tend to project there own images onto our Saviour, go back to the dinner table with Jesus. During the conversation with him you are able to find out a lot. So, where does he stand on science? The creation story? War? Muslims? Drinking alcohol? Slavery? homosexuality? Organ music? Success? Politics? Liturgy?

Now as you imagine those things, the answers to those questions that the Jesus that you have pictured at your table giving, consider where you stand on those very same issues.

Hmm. Weird, huh?

I bet you dollars to donuts that the Jesus that you imagined, the one that is closest to your heart, while he may LOOK different than you, has the same beliefs as you. Amazing isn't it that Jesus would cast the exact same vote as you would in every election and would rally around the same causes as you. Huh. Amazing.

So who is he really?

So called "conservative Christians" are sometimes accused of holding the Bible right up there beside God, worshipping "the Father, the Son and the Holy scriptures." This approach can dampen conversation and certainly halts any invitation to questions.

So called "liberal Christians" are sometimes accused of throwing the baby out with the bath water. They go in the opposite direction and site scripture as little more than quaint fables from which we can find a moral if we try really, really hard.

And who are you? Who are we? As we gather together on Thursday evenings devouring this book by Brian McLaren, loving some of it and struggling with other parts, we find ourselves asking this precise question. If we each cast Jesus in our own image, something safe, familiar and agreeable then we are unable to stretch or be stretched. We are then unable to struggle, or be challenged by the Jesus of the Good News. I hope that we will be people who can proudly say that while we do not take the Bible literally we do take it seriously.

Listen to this passage from John. "In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him.... what has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people... the true light, which enlightens everyone." Now from Genesis. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...Let there be light...And God saw that it was good."

Jesus, Jesus the man in whatever from we imagine him, is the new Genesis. He is the new beginning. He is not the beginning of something that happens after our time here on earth, he is the new beginning of a new earth, of a new light, of the dawn of a new day. He looks upon us in creation and sees that we are good just as God saw the original creation as good. In the New Zealand Lord's Prayer they say,

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples  
of the earth!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom

sustain our hope and come on earth.

Peace and freedom come on earth. Heaven, here on earth. God's kingdom, here on earth. Not in some age to come, not at some point in the distant, unimaginable future, but here and now. Let your mind not be distracted by heavenly things but inspired by the words that Jesus speaks to us through time, telling us, encouraging us, commanding us, to bring about God's kingdom here on earth.

So we might pray, dear Lord baby Jesus, help us to bring God's justice and peace to earth today and every day of our lives.

Amen