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Speech: At The Crossroads - You Can Make a Difference (Version 2)

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At the Crossroads-You can make a difference

5th Avenue Presbyterian Church Capital Grand Campaign

Preamble

It is a very great honour to have been invited to keynote this important fund raising campaign and have to confess that I agreed to come really only because my old friend Dr. Oscar McCloud asked me. We in South Africa owe him and others like him a huge debt for all the support he gave us during our struggle ^{against} as the vicious policy of apartheid particularly when he was a leading light in the W.C.C. I told him that I was quite decrepit, which reminds me of the occasion when I was honoured in a small Dutch village when the village school was named after me. That's not the point of the story. The school was celebrating its 400th year anniversary and when Leah and I arrived for the festivities a little girl came up to me and asked, "Were you here when the school started?" I knew I was past it but had not thought quite so obviously.

I have recently been intrigued to note how God the omnipotent, the omniscient one, quite extraordinarily after the advent of human kind seemed ^{partner} always determined to have a human fellow worker, ~~patron~~, collaborator, in whatever divine project God sought to undertake. Thus after the emergence of the ^{first couple} ~~test couple~~, God made them to be God's viceroys, God's stand-ins, ^{God's} representatives as made in God's image.

And so from then on this human couple would bear rule, have dominion over the rest of God's creation to preserve it, to cherish it as God's stewards so that concern for the environment, for pollution, for the wanton depletion of

irreplaceable natural resources would not be but a passing fad but a profound theological, religious concern. To be unmindful of the environment would not just be a political impropriety but a religious misdemeanor, a sin. We were meant to

- λ preserve all of creation gently, compassionately, caringly as a religious obligation, as part of what it means to be human, to be created in God's image, to care for all
- λ creation and all that is in, ~~at~~ as coming from the hand of God for the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it. We were entrusted with the stewardship of the gifts of God's immeasurable bounty, ~~an~~ ^{fall (sorry!)} overflowing, gushing of the divine generosity.

In the times of the beginning, the story relates that there was a wonderful primordial harmony, peace, friendliness, togetherness, so much so was this the case that there was no bloodshed, amazingly, not even for religious sacrificial purposes. Everyone, everything was vegetarian. There was in God's intention no conflict only an idyllic harmony and peace.

- λ In the other story of the beginning too, Adam and Eve are set ^{till} ~~to~~ ~~fill~~ the ~~God~~ earth,
- λ to keep at bay the encroaching desert, to be co-creators with God, bringing forth offspring as God had brought them into being as ^{nurturers} upholders of cultivated, ~~civilised~~ ^{civilised} existence human
- λ ~~extra-human?~~ partners, with the awesome potential of having things going
- λ horribly awry though their exercise of the divine gift of freedom, of the creaturely autonomy to say yea or nay to the divine offer of love, to obey or to refuse to obey, with God the omnipotent, impotent, powerless to intervene expect through a rejectable offer of grace when we were about to make our choice with its ^{cataclysmic} ~~astalynic~~ consequences.

God had a deep reverence for our freedom, so deep that God had much rather we went freely to hell than compel us to go to heaven. And so things were

X out of joint, alienation, disharmony, bloodshed, murder, conflict, disintegration where formerly there had been love, togetherness, peace, harmony, family. God's

X dream was shattered. Things fell apart. There was a brokenness, crying out for reconciliation at one ~~point~~^{ment} to accomplish to restore things to what they were at the

X beginning. God sought ~~God's~~^{out} collaborators, the patriarchs ~~after~~^{and then} the people of Israel. "Hi Moses". "Hi God". "Will you go to Pharaoh and tell him to let my people go". ~~Moses~~^{Mo} - "God you can't be serious. I came here, you know, to escape his clutches and you want me to do what-go back there?"

Isn't it amazing the trouble God took to persuade Moses as if the Exodus

X hinged ~~critically~~^{crucially} on his participation. It has seemed to be thus always God

X looking for and ~~heavy~~^{having} to persuade a reluctant fellow worker or a skeptical one. Just recall how God sought to persuade a reluctant, retiring, sensitive Jeremiah, assuring him extraordinarily that he was no afterthought but had been part of the

X divine plan from all eternities. How mind-blowing to think that none of us is an

X afterthought, is an accident. Some of us might look like accidents but none is.

"Knock, Knock." "Who's there?" "Gabriel." "Gabriel who?" "The Archangel. Hi Mary." "Hallo." "Mary, God would like you to be the mother of his Son." "What-do you know that in this village you can't even scratch yourself without everybody knowing it and you want me to be what-an unmarried mother.

We would have been up a creek had that been her reply. Mercifully she replied "Behold the handmaid of the Lord - be it unto me according to your word"

No, sorry, I'm a decent girl, try next door. And the whole universe breathed a cosmic sigh of relief and the incarnation could happen.

God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Thus God blesses us so that we may be a blessing to others, pours God's gifts and graces unstintingly on us so that we may be conduits to pass them on to others. You all know how we have been told that the Dead Sea receives fresh water, but does not pass it on and thus becomes brackish and dead. God has no one but you to help God realize God's dream to make all things new and restore ^{the} primordial harmony, when we were ⁱⁿ ^{cate} family living a ~~deliberate~~ network of interdependence.

God's dream is of us realizing we are family that is no sentimental ⁿ pamby figure of speech. It's probably the most ^{radical} ^{said} ^{preached} thing Jesus of us. That we are sisters and brothers with God as our Father and Mother. If the ethic of family prevailed we would be appalled and do something to rectify the situation where we can spend such obscene amounts on a defense budget of death and destruction when a small fraction would enable our sisters and brothers everywhere to have clean water, enough to eat with proper housing and sanitation, with adequate healthcare and education. For the ethic of family says from each according to their ability to each according to their need. We would be appalled and do something about it that we were contemplating dropping bombs on our sisters and brothers, members of our family so nonchalantly, so casually.

In this family all belong, there are no outsiders-black and white, rich and poor, educated and not educated, men and women, old and young, gay and straight, Sharon and Arafat, Protestants and Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland, Iraqis and Americans, George Bush and Saddam Hussein. All belong all are God's children in this family.

May God bless you as you raise funds. Open yourselves to the divine generosity to become more and more who you are God's fellow workers, God's partners, to help God realize his dream. **For God has no one but you and without you God will not as we without God cannot.** Amber Christ