

## **7 Shared Convictions: God, Jesus and the Enneagram**

Psalm 8, Psalm 26, Hebrews 2:5-12 by Patty Friesen (October 6, 2024)

This morning we are beginning a 3-part sermon series of intergenerational faith exploration using the 7 shared convictions of Mennonite World Conference. (Hold up the 7). We are doing this study as an annual intergenerational invitation to faith and baptism and also because I'd like us to adopt these 2007, 7 Shared Convictions as the teaching tool of OMC and set aside the 1995 24 articles of a Mennonite Confession of Faith (Hold up confession) as Canadian Mennonite University, and other pastors and congregations are doing and I'd like us to do it before I retire at Easter.

After my 3 sermons on this (hold up 7 shared), Archbishop Len Rempel will come in January to describe the difference between the 7 Shared (hold) and the 24 articles (hold) and we will vote on this (7 shared) at our AGM Feb. 8. Does this make sense? I will try to make this theological study as thrilling as I can. Let us turn to #925, 925 in Voices Together. We will begin with God. God is a good place to start. By the grace of God, we seek to live and proclaim the good news of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As part of the one body of Christ at all times and places, we hold the following to be central to our belief and practice. 1. God is known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.

So this statement is sharing the conviction that God is one in 3 Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit or in the more inclusive language of Ruth Duck - God is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. The statement indeed catches God as our Creator and then doesn't go into much detail about who God is but quickly gets to God's purpose which is

to restore all humanity by calling a people to be and now it quickly gets to our purpose: to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.

Getting into God a bit more - in our first reading, Psalm 8 contrasts the power and majesty of God. It ponders why God would think of or care for humans. The psalmist does not lament human frailty but reaffirms the unique place of humanity in relation to God who made us and the rest of creation.

In our second reading, the author of Hebrews repeats Psalm 8 and reminds us that the beginning and ending of all Christian thinking and living is God. God is the subject of the New Testament as well as of the Old. In scripture there are so many metaphors and descriptions of God that I won't get into today but have tried to explore over the years as God as welcoming father in the art of Rembrandt - anyone remember that sermon? God as Creator, God as Mother Tree, God as Eagle caring for her young.

Having said that everything starts and ends with God, the writer of Hebrews moves us to the primary consideration within understanding God, is God embodied in Christ. Christology is thinking about who Jesus is in relation to God and to us. Some pursue this study through the metaphors also used of Jesus such as Son, High Priest, Pioneer of our Faith and Advocate. We can only begin to chip away at the immensity of who we think God and Jesus are by breaking them down into smaller understandings and it has been this way since the beginning of Christianity.

2. Jesus is the Son of God. Through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples, redeemed the world, and offers eternal life. The church has always struggled with the insistence of Hebrews that Jesus "had to become like his brothers and sisters or we humans in every respect." We know

what we are like, and we hesitate to admit Jesus into our ranks of humanity. Some early Christians fell into the heresy of denying Jesus' humanity, saying he only "seemed" to be fully human. No New Testament writer takes the humanity of Jesus Christ more seriously or more purposefully than does the author of Hebrews.

Now in shared conviction #2 - Anabaptists emphasis through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples. Across the page in #923 the Apostles Creed of the 2nd century - there is no mention of Jesus' humanity - it's pretty focused on his conception by the Holy Spirit to a virgin and it's like he went straight from the virgin birth to death and resurrection. Below 923 in 924 the Nicene Creed of the 4th century - if we look at the 3rd paragraph - there is still the emphasis of the virgin birth but then and became truly human - so for 2 centuries the early church struggled with the humanity of Christ enough to include it in the Nicene Creed but then again it moves right into his death and resurrection without any attention to Jesus' life and teachings. Anabaptists add Jesus' life and teachings and showing us how to follow Jesus in life and teachings. We call this the Anabaptist pause - meaning we can agree with other Christians on these ancient creeds but we take a breath in order to emphasis the life and teachings of Christ and our responsibility with them to become disciples. The Anabaptist Pause.

I also have spent years talking about Jesus' life and character as Healer, Feeder, Advocate of the poor and children. Today in an interesting twist, I'd like to examine Jesus as the perfect human being - in terms of him being all the Enneagram personality types. We are using the Enneagram Personality Tool at the 11:00 Sunday school Forum with Amanda Dodge to help us understand our personalities in our church committee

work to see where our strengths and conflicts lie. I will describe Jesus in terms of these personality characteristics and suggest how our certain personality types may gravitate to certain jobs at church. See if any of this makes any sense.

Using ancient teachings, the Enneagram describes 9 personality types in a circle with #9 The Peacemaker at the top. This Peacemaker characteristic of Jesus would be his ability to relate to all kinds of people from tax collectors to Gentile women to Pharisees like Nicodemus. As the Prince of Peace, we begin with Jesus as a Peacemaker and we will come back and end with #9 Peacemaker.

Going clockwise #1 is The Reformer who is principled and works well within rules and yet works to reform them. Jesus as a #1 would say, "You have heard it said, Love the Lord your God, but I say unto you, Love your neighbour as yourself." In his time, Moses was a Reformer - shaping the people of God with boundaries of loyalty. Hannah in the Bible also shaped the people of God, describing the One who raised up the lowly and brought down princes. Jesus loved the Law of Moses yet worked to open it up to be more inclusive. Within congregations, #1s are lawyers, Sunday school teachers and accountants who like rules and like things to be orderly but also like to shape that order. We need 1s in the church.

#2 The Helper - this is Jesus who spends all day helping, healing, raising and feeding people because he is made to do that. Other helpers in the Bible would be Dorcas in the Book of Acts who sewed clothes for the poor and the Good Samaritan was a helper. Within congregations, social workers, chaplains, deacons and pastors identify with the #2 Helper. Luke identifies as a 2 Helper. We need 2s at church to help everybody.

#3 The Achiever is goal oriented, pragmatic and image conscious. This is Jesus in Luke 4 saying, The Spirit of the Lord is upon **me** to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives. Recovery of sight and set the oppressed free.” It is very important to 3’s to be successful, inspire others and connect with them and build success into the mission. In the Bible, this would be the Queen of Sheba who came with her entourage from Ethiopia to test Solomon and King Solomon himself with his palaces and wives. Very success oriented. Within congregations - 3’s would naturally be selected as chairs and leaders of committees asking the image and goal questions of who are we and what is our job going to be? We need 3s at church.

#4 The Individualist or Artist is very expressive, creative, dramatic and believe in their uniqueness. This is Jesus asserting his unique identity as the Son of God. Other artist types in the Bible would be Joseph with his coat of many colours that stands out and has dreams. Lydia the seller of purple must have had an artsy eye. Artist types are attracted to being on a worship committee because it is a chance to do visual art, music, bible dramas, etc. Lois Siemens identifies as a 4 artist/individualist. We need 4s at church.

#5 The Investigator or I would say the Student is very cerebral, sometimes withdrawn and introverted. This is Jesus as a young man running away from his parents to study the Law of Moses in the Temple with the other scribes. In the Bible, this is the prophetess Anna in the Temple who comes to bless Jesus and understand who he is. This is Nicodemus who comes at night to understand Jesus. In a congregation, these are our readers and thinkers. They don’t plan the parties but they bring depth to every theological discussion. We need 5s at church.

#6 The Loyalist is committed, practical and responsible - a dedicated friend. This is Jesus in John 17 praying for his disciples before his death that God would watch over them and take care of them. This is the loyalty of Ruth to Naomi in the Bible, the loyalty of Mary Magdalene and John the disciple who followed Jesus to the end. In congregations, these are the practical, responsible, faithful workers - the trustees and Sunday morning coffeemakers. We definitely need 6s at church.

#7 Enthusiasts are busy, fun-loving, spontaneous. This is the Jesus who eats and drinks with sinners and lets women wash his feet with their hair. This is the Jesus whom they call a glutton and drunkard. Another 7's in the Bible is Miriam dancing to celebrate God's rescue of the children of Israel through the Red Sea. Perhaps the best and scariest 7 in the Bible would be Jonah who tries to escape responsibility and is desperate for comfort under the vine. 7s are rebellious. You can't tell a 7 what to do. In congregations, enthusiasts are in charge of restaurant lunches, potlucks and ukulele bands. Does this sound like anyone we know? We need 7s in the church to keep the party going.

#8 Challengers are confident and justice oriented. This is Jesus clearing the temple of the money-changers and their scams. In congregations, these are the prophetic people planning protests and wanting to make a difference. Hagar in the Bible, challenged her mistress Sarah and then challenged God to be with her son Ishmael. John the Baptist was also a challenger of the status quo. I think 8s are drawn to the Community Connections committee because they do want our church to make a difference in Osler and in our larger community. We need 8s in the church.

#9 Peacemakers hold it all together with their easy-going, affable nature. This is Jesus who says, My peace I give you. My peace I leave you. This is Jesus the Peacemaker trying to settle arguments about who will sit at his right and left hand in the kingdom of God. Other peacemakers in the Bible would be Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, bringing peace and calm to Mary after the annunciation. This is Barnabus who goes to the newly converted Paul and tries to make peace between him and the Christian community whom he persecuted. At church, we need peacemakers, the calm people who can see both sides of any congregational disagreement. 9s are so versatile they serve on all the committees. We need 9s at church.

On any committee at church - we are best served by a diversity of personalities bringing our strengths. If we are all one type, we are liable to kill each other, except the peacemakers of course who will be nice but not get anything done. Amanda Dodge is joining us in the sanctuary during the Sunday school hour to teach us more about the Enneagram to help us in our understanding of ourselves and will solve all our problems. Most of us don't want to be the number we are. We imagine ourselves as more put together than that. I cried when I learned I was a rebellious hedonistic 7 because I knew it to be true and in the embrace of that truth can become our redemption, integration and wholeness.

As a human, Jesus is a friend and Lord for each one of us. He understands each one of us in our unique giftedness and sinfulness and works to redeem all of us to our best selves. In congregations - Jesus as the one thing we have in common, works to bind us all together in our differing personalities and give us a purpose to exist as a

community not only for each other's sake but for others in the valley and city as well.

Let us pray...

Thank you, God our Creator and Jesus, our Saviour that you made us and love us each uniquely as we are. In our uniqueness, you also call us to fill certain responsibilities according to our giftedness so we ask for clarity on what you may want us to do today and every day. Amen.

## 9 - The Peacemaker

8-The Challenger

1-The Reformer

7-The Enthusiast

2-The Helper

6-The Loyalist

3-The Achiever

5-The Investigator

4-The Artist