

Advent 3A  
December 12, 2010  
Matthew 11:2-11

### ***Is It Tomorrow Yet?***

It was certainly, at the time, an unexpected event, but, in retrospect, it was as it was supposed to be. Just going to listen to some music. A concert of Brahms Piano Trios.

The lights dimmed. The artists appeared on stage, bowed and took their seats.

And then, there she was — "The One." She sat in a chair beside the pianist. She turned pages. And she was lovely and artistic and mysterious.

In his mind ... he and she, the music and the evening, blended and blurred as emotion seen in a swirl of sound and color — even though she wore all black.

He whispered, barely audible "She is the one." His friend leaned over. "What?" she asked. He just put his finger to his lips and shook his head. "Nothing. Everything." He was in love. Oh no. Now what?

The concert ended. The performers bowed and disappeared off stage. He walked home, remembering the vision of the evening. Charlie Brown had the little red-haired girl. He would have the woman dressed in black who turned the pages. She was THE ONE.

As wonderful as this love-at-first sight may seem, it is just a wobbly vision and a silly little story until they meet face-to-face. Until they kiss that first kiss. Then their lives collide in a real way, then everything gets all wonderfully mixed up, and he really knew that she was THE ONE. But then -- Oh no -- Now what?

As much as he dreamed and hoped his whole short life that he would find THE ONE, now that she was here he would now have to learn how to live with and how to truly love *THIS* ONE. He would have to discover who she was and how truly wonderful she was. He would have to know her, love her, trust her as she is. And if there's to be a love truly worthy of the name then the new expectation and hope is the anticipation of knowing her and loving her and being together -- for better, for worse, for sickness and health in good times and bad times, rich or poor ...

The dream of tomorrow ... fulfilled in the everyday today.

Love stories get us thinking about destiny. (And that's a big part of Advent ... destiny ... God's plan for us for this world.) Love stories get us to thinking about how things, some things, some events just seem to go according to some plan, ... but I've been told (and I can testify to this) that this only sounds true when we're talking about love and only when we're face-to-face with "The One" and then only in looking back — when all the silly little pieces fit, quite unexpectedly — and just as we had hoped.

But when we're in it. When we're down in it. It's not all that clear. Everything seems and feels so much more foolish, more uncertain, tinged by doubt. The perfect night of glorious music and the love-at-first-sight in the glow of stage lights has to end. And in these lives we live we find that faith, hope and love are tested and tried by doubt, despair and even pain.

This is the crisis of love: When lovers meet face-to-face, at the point of the kiss -- there's a judgment, questions of identity and intention -- Are you The One ... or should I await another? And the question isn't hypothetical. Our future's at stake. Our destiny.

Our tomorrows meet us today.

I think at the heart of John the Baptist's question to Jesus ... is a crisis of faith, a crisis of hope, and a crisis of love. John's preaching expresses all the expectations and aspirations God's people have hoped and dreamed and waited for in the coming of the Christ ... THE ONE ... we've been waiting for to set things straight

But when Jesus of Nazareth comes along, when our hopes and expectations collide with the actual one ... who he really is and what he does gives substance and truth to John's fiery preaching. John anticipates the fiery coming God's Christ.

Now that he's here, he has to learn to love and trust THE ONE has come into the world.

Jesus points John's disciples to the evidence of his work, his works of grace and mercy that reverse sin and death. Here's the true fire of God's Holy Spirit at work.

What do you see? Jesus asks. What have you heard? Go and tell that.

You see, this is where we learn about God, where we find out who God is and what it is that God intends. The blind see. The deaf hear. The lame leap for joy in his presence. The poor hear good news And the dead are raised to new life. Wherever Jesus goes — new life breaks out.

Yet John remains in prison at Herod's whim and the religious and sophisticated of his community are conspiring with the Empire to prepare a cross for Jesus. Faith is tested. Hope is strained. Are you really the one? Or are we still waiting ...

Did we expect that our hope of salvation was to be like this? When we think of God in all his glory do we think of Jesus. A God who hides himself in human flesh. A God who dies. A God who is raised for us?

Does Jesus — this Jesus of scripture and of history — meet our hopes and fears and expectations? Because if "the hopes and fears of all the years" meet in Jesus. If God is with us — in the man Jesus then to meet him is to spark a crisis, and its the crisis of the kiss that brings up even more of our questions.

Who is the one ... we look to, today? The one we trust, right now? The one we follow, Who is our model, in this life? The one who saves us? The one in whom we hope? (And what are we hoping for?) Who is THE ONE ... THE ONE we love ... above all people and things?

One night my son Luke was having a hard time going to sleep, because he was looking forward to a big event the next day. Finally, he fell asleep, but sometime in the night he got up ... and came into our room. When I opened my eyes in the morning. He's staring right at me and he asks: "Daddy, Is it tomorrow?" I had to think a little ... but I knew what he was really asking and the answer was yes, yes it was.

I wonder ... after years of waiting for tomorrow to come do we at last wake up one day and ask God — Is It Tomorrow Yet? Has the day, at last arrived, because The One Is Here with Us.

You see, John the Baptist was right, a judgment has come, a crisis is here, and it's the judgment like that of a kiss that strikes the axe to the root of the trees, that turns all of life upside down.

When God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, kissed your forehead with the waters of your baptism ... When God in Jesus in bread and wine turns his head to kiss us this morning ... Things turn around. Minds change. And we're caught up and intertwined in this complex set of relationships that is the life and future with our God.

It's the transformation of that one true kiss. It's the promise that when we get to the end, in the arms of the one who loved us, and we look back, we see at last that it happened the way it was supposed to.

Yet it was all still a surprise ... when our Lord Jesus looks at us and tells us: "You, you are THE ONE. I love you." Amen.