

All Saints Sunday  
Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City, NM

November 5, 2017  
Rev. Paul Moore

## Human Light

I want to take you on an adventure of the imagination. Our plenary speaker at Convention reminded us over and over again that all stories are true, some of them actually happened. So, when I say, "Once upon a time," I'm talking about you. Here is a story.

Once upon a time there was a great and mighty king. His castle reached up to the heavens. The throne room was so big you could hardly see across it. The dais on which the great emerald throne sat was 24 stairs above the main floor. The richest of tapestries hung on the walls, and great stained-glass windows tickled the floor with colored lights. On either side of this throne there were two other thrones. Each was as grand as the center one. On one sat a beautiful lady. The sheer beauty of her royal presence made the birds in the tapestries sing harmonies. Being in her presence made one wise, compassionate and eager to do great feats of self-sacrificing goodness in the world. On the other a fine young man. His visage would be perfect, except for a ring of strange marks around his forehead. One might even think they were scars. If one looked out of the corner of one's eyes rather than staring hard ahead, one might just catch a glimmer, a ripple of light, and one knew that yes, angels are present.

Throngs of people crowd the great hall. Nobles in rich array and humble beggars in rags all stand, and talk and do business. No one ever worries about being cheated, for it is not possible to cheat anyone in the great hall of the great king. No one worries about being belittled or kicked aside, for nobleman and beggar, all are equal in the great hall. For here a wondrous thing happened that forever changed everything. And that is the story I am about to tell.

At the beginning of this story things were not as they are at the end. The hall was largely empty of people, and outside the hall people cheated one another, maligned and ignored one another, they fought and killed for the slightest reasons, and things were terrible. At that time the King said to the young man, "Son, you are the prince, the power of youthful vigor in ruling with equity and compassion is yours. Yet our people fight and kill, steal and rob, and imagine that one is better than the other. They have become far less than what we intended, for they are hardly human at all. I want you to go among them and show them what they are called to be."

And so, the young man left the throne room. He emerged in the market in the humble clothes of a workman. The people had not been in the hall, so they did not recognize him. The powerful tried to cheat him; thieves tried to rob him; he was kicked to the curb and maligned, and yet he endured it all. Slowly others began to act like him as well. They somehow found the prince's lifestyle peaceful, even in the midst of all the abuse.

His strange ways caught the attention of the powerful. They began to fear that if

everyone acted as he did they would lose their position of power, and, they in turn would become the victims. In a huddle they decided, "Rid the world of him and all would be right again." The stirred up the mobs, who stirred up the people. They accused him of impersonating royalty, and they caught the prince, beat him around the head, crammed a mock crown of thorny branches on his head, and struck him down outside the city and left him for dead.

What they did not know is that the royalty in that land are more noble than death itself. When those who had followed the prince went to bury his body they found it was no longer there. They decided the only way to find out what happened was to go to the Great King. So it was that they approached the great Throne Room. As they entered they saw a most marvelous sight. There was the Prince, in greater glory than ever before, walking up the long aisle toward the high dais. In his train were saints and sages, and those who were known for their noble goodness. The songs of the angels rose to a crescendo, and about his head they noticed the marks of the thorns. However, they were not ugly, for they showed something marvelous. The scars of the thorns wove a beautiful pattern on his brow, that seemed to glow with a special sort of light. Angels touched his skin in wonder and awe. They had no such marks of honor. As glorious as they were, theirs was of a different kind. This was unique, and they hardly understood it.

He moved triumphantly, slowly and gracefully, up the steps. His workman's clothes contrasted starkly with the rich robes of the King, but he was received with a royal kiss and sat down on the empty throne. As he turned the doors of the great hall opened wide. People started to pour in from outside. There the powerful saw the object of their wrath on the throne and were cut to the heart. Thieves saw him there and found their hands strengthened for honest work. Workmen saw him there and saw their own, only without all the taints of cutting corners and shoddy work. The first were seen to be the last, and the last, first. Here, at last, they saw what they were made for, as the King had first imagined them, fully human and full of glory.

Now, lest you think my story not true, look at the readings. The first one from the Revelation talks about those who have gone through the great ordeal. That ordeal is the work of the Spirit to carry us through our brokenness to the vision of our fullest, greatest calling. The Epistle lesson talks about being revealed when we see him for who he is, when we see our own human kind sitting beside the Great King in heaven. The Gospel lesson describes a different sort of way of being. That way of being is our own best, heavenly calling, our own fullest humanity.

Now look at the words to the Gospel hymn we just sang, Hymn 435, *At the Name of Jesus*

1 At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, every tongue confess him King of glory now; 'tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord, who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

2 Humbled for a season, to receive a Name from the lips of sinners, unto whom he came,

faithfully he bore it spotless to the last, brought it back victorious, when from death he passed;

3 bore it up triumphant, with its human light, through all ranks of creatures, to the central height to the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast; filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

4 Name him, Christians, name him, with love strong as death, name with awe and wonder and with bated breath; he is God the Savior, he is Christ the Lord, ever to be worshiped, trusted, and adored.

5 In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue all that is not holy, all that is not true: crown him as your Captain in temptation's hour; let his will enfold you in its light and power.

6 Christians, this Lord Jesus shall return again, with his Father's glory, o'er the earth to reign; for all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow, and our hearts confess him King of Glory now.

Here is the human light that the angels marvel to touch.

So, what is so special about being human? The other day I was working on my lathe making a candlestick. I start out with a rough stick. I cut it down to relative size, I put it on the lathe, and I round it out until it is an even dowel. Then I took the chisels and I began to get creative. After I was done I finished it with Tung oil, which takes about 3 days. It takes time to turn a candlestick, and it takes time to draw out of us the fullness of the glory of our humanity. The chisels God uses are the choices we have to make. Each choice moves us slightly toward or away from our true calling. That is the glory of living in time. We can change. The Angels live it out in the eternal NOW without the possibility of change. They are locked in; we, are human.

Living in time as we do, we have free will. Free will means we can choose either to grow closer to our reality or away from it. We can choose between life and death. We can choose between love and indifference, between violence and peace. The angels are machines; we are human.

Living in time as we do, we can choose to love. We talk about the Trinity being perfect relationship where each member relates in perfect, self-giving love. We talk about the love of Jesus that gave himself for us on the Cross. Loving as he loved us, we share in his glory. Angels just obey; humanity's great destiny is to share in the very nature of divinity.

Today is All Saints Sunday. It is the day of the year when we celebrate all those who are being caught up in the great mystery of salvation in Jesus. Since none of us can really say who is in and who is out, this is a day to celebrate full humanity. Our Christian faith is designed to draw out of us our truest and best humanity as we have come to know it in

Jesus. Some of us have already slipped through the Great Doors. They now know themselves fully as standing in that Great Hall. They see the King in all his glory, human like us and also divine. The rest of us here look around. We see one another, and we have a choice. Shall we see one another as "merely human," or will we see one another as "growing toward full humanity," participating in the divine, sharing that human light with Jesus in the very Throne room of heaven? When we see one another that way it's not hard to see this place full of saints—not just those who have gone before, but those with whom we share our lives here and now.

Today we baptize two young people. David is 20 and is headed off to join the Marines. We will add him to the prayers for those in the military, and we pray for his safety and wish him well. We will welcome him home when he returns. We baptize his little sister, Olivia as well. She is in school here, and she wants to join the youth confirmation class. They share our humanity, in our faith, and in our hope. Baptism is the way the Church acknowledges and shares in what God is doing in the life of a person. We officially launch the relationship between each one and God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We welcome them into the fellowship of those whose hope carries our human light into the very courts of Heaven. We share with them our divine earthly calling and our heavenly hope on earth.

We welcome them as saints.