



## WHAT WE WILL BE

May 19, 2019, The Fifth Sunday of Easter

1 John 3:1-3

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The novelist, poet and playwright Gertrude Stein wrote about an interaction she had with Pablo Picasso later in life. Years prior he had painted a portrait of Stein, but at this point in his life he did not recognize who she was right away. Stein decided to have a little fun with the moment. She wrote, "I murmured to Picasso that I liked his portrait of Gertrude Stein. Yes, he said, somebody said that she does not look like it, but that doesn't make any difference, she will."<sup>1</sup> Considering the rumors of Picasso's rampant ego this quote makes complete sense. If you have not seen the portrait, it is an intense and imposing representation of Stein. Picasso clearly captured a woman in command of who she is.

When we speak of being the Children of God, our focus is quite often on the notion of how deeply and personally God both creates us and loves us. But this text from the first epistle of John brings us another facet for what the phrase has to teach us about ourselves. The second verse of our text this morning is one of the most intriguing in all of scripture. "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed...what we will be has not yet been revealed." Perhaps Picasso was on to something.

It is an evocative thought, isn't it? It is especially for those of us in the second half of our lives who may believe what we will be has pretty much shown itself already. The message for all of us, from 2 to 102 years old, is that God is not done with us yet. For those of us who feel like we are not quite the people we want to be, this text is a word of hope. For those of us who think we have ourselves and life all figured out, this text is a kick in the pants that we may not know as much about who God is calling us to be as we think we do.



For Lydia Spinelli this text is a word by which she has lived, whether she has ever heard it or not. And is a particularly apt text on this day when we celebrate Lydia's faithful service at Brick. For over four decades she has dedicated much of her life to what has not yet been revealed in us. She has poured her indefatigable energy, and pedagogical wisdom, her strong will and her passionate focus, her institutional know-how and most importantly her abounding love into our school, and thus upon the littlest ones in the Brick Church family. She has seen a glimpse of what has yet to be revealed in generations of our little ones as they begin their journey of self-discovery in the classroom. She has sought to nurture the best of what is inside of each child, to begin to unlock the potential inherently present within each and every one.

Now, it is easy for us to recognize that there is still much to be revealed in whom children will grow to be. To see the same thing in ourselves is not always so obvious. This is a good reason to read this scripture text in the season of Easter. First, it is good to be reminded that Easter is not a single day but an entire seven-week season. We tend to think of Easter and the resurrection as a single act, a single moment when Jesus is brought from death to life. And obviously Easter includes that singularly important moment. But the effect of that resurrection is even wider and deeper than that. It is the biggest ripple in the lake of our existence imaginable. The defeat of brokenness and death by the power of God's love continues to unfold across the universe and within each one of us. The perfection of God will not be closeted away to some distinct corner or discrete moment. The perfection of God is constantly on the move, crossing every boundary, healing every wound, repairing every imperfection. The resurrection is playing itself out within each one of us, throughout our lives and all that is to come. The resurrection of Easter is not a single day, it is not even a season, it is an unfolding drama over all the seasons of our life. "What we will be has not yet been revealed."

If you take a tour through the classrooms at Brick you will see every room has a space for dramatic play, for daydreaming and acting out who our children may



become. There are blocks to imagine being builders and kitchens to imagine being chefs and all manner of opportunities for our children to try on who they may grow into being.

This text invites us all into that remarkable space of dramatic play. It encourages us to spark our imagination. It challenges us to consider who we will be when God's love permeates all of who we are; healing every last corner within us; drawing us out into the best of who we are. What we will be has not yet been revealed. Just as our children in the school dream forward and use their imaginations to try on who they may be in the years to come, we are called to that same task. We are called to use our imagination, our theological imagination, an imagination that recognizes that God's love is deeply present within us insistently pulling us forward. And that love is so powerful and transforming that it denies all of the boundaries and limitations we place upon ourselves as individuals and as a community.

So, let me ask you, who would you be if you could be anyone, anything? Now, I do not mean the superficial things we daydream about, like being a rock star or the King of Norway. What kind of person would you be? How would you live? If God healed your every wound; removed your every hurt; washed away your every limitation of fear or pettiness, insecurity or jealousy or greed, or whatever holds you back; who would you be? Who would you be? Who would you be?

And what if we asked the same question of ourselves as the Brick Church community? What if we dreamt beyond our every limitation and sought to live into that dream? Who would we be together?

“What we will be has not yet been revealed.” But we are given a tantalizing glimpse. Our text tells us, “What we do know is this, when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.” We are God's children. And as God's children we are being called forward to be like God's Son in Jesus Christ. And what we see of Jesus' life in the scriptures is one of compassion, generosity, healing, and a deep and abiding faith in God. From the healing of Blind



Bartimaeus to the breaking of the bread at Emmaus; from the feeding of the five thousand to the raising of Lazarus from the dead, we see the power of God's love pouring out from Jesus' life and transforming those around him.

Now we are not called to be Jesus. But how might we be the bringers of God's compassion, generosity and healing into the world? What it might look like for you might not be exactly how it looks for me. But for each and every one of us, what we will be has not yet been revealed.

Lydia, for the past 40 years, you have encouraged and shaped so many little ones to begin their journey of becoming who they will be. And you have helped this Brick Church community to continue to grow into who God is calling us to be. We are so deeply grateful to you for all you have done for us. And we are grateful to God for creating you to be the educator and leader you have been in this place. As you enter a new phase of life and a new time of growth, I say even to you, what you will be has not yet been revealed.

We still have a few more weeks left in this season of Easter. I invite you to daydream just a little in these days. If God's all-powerful, all-healing, all-perfecting, death-defying love were to be fully present within you, what would your portrait look like? Who would you be? How would you think about yourself? How would you treat those around you? How you would you spend your days?

And what would the portrait painting of this congregation look like? What would it show of what we do here together? Of how we would worship together? Of how we would learn together? Of how we would care for each other? Of how we would serve beside the most vulnerable of our city together?

An artist much more imaginative and talented than Picasso has a portrait painted of us. "What we will be has not yet been revealed." But our God knows exactly what we will look like. Let's try and get a glimpse of God's glory fully shining through us. "What we will be has not yet been revealed," but it will be.



*Thanks be to God. Amen.*

1 Guy Sales, Day1.org, April 30, 2006.