

*Dance, dance, wherever you may be
I am the lord of the dance, said he
And I lead you all, wherever you may be
And I lead you all in the dance, said he!*

I must admit that the Lord of the Dance has always been one of my favourite hymns. It has warmed my heart every time we've sung it here at Grace and my fondness for the hymn has only grown as my daughter Philippa has come to adore the song, singing it for many days after we've last sung it in church. While I've always loved the song, I must admit that I haven't always loved dancing. Like many boys growing up I never understood what dancing was all about, never understood the allure or fun of dancing. I never believed my mother or adults who told me I should learn how to dance, that it would be important when I grew up or that a man who knew how to dance was "attractive." Even in my early adolescence, when we began to have dance socials, I still didn't understand why so many adults celebrated dancing as a fun and essential skill, especially since there was very little real dancing going on at these middle school dances, and all of it was pretty awkward. The first time I began to really get a glimpse of what fun dance could be was in high school, when I signed up for salsa lessons, because a girl I was interested in was going to be in the class. While the salsa class didn't get me any closer to that girl, it did begin to teach me how much fun dancing could be, and how much work it took if you wanted to really enjoy dancing and to dance well.

There is so much going on in any one dance: there is the interplay between the dancers, there is the series of steps and moves that need to be performed, there are different rhythms and beats which need to be listened to, interpreted and responded to. Dancing is perhaps one of the most dynamic experiences that we as humans can participate in: from the simplest first dance at a wedding, to the complexly choreographed tribal dances of the Masai in Africa. No matter what the dance, whether it is complex, sultry and energetic or slow and simple, there is deep emotion and dynamism when two or more people join together, move together to music or to a beat, there is something almost divine.

It is perhaps no surprise that C.S. Lewis, one of my favourite authors, in his book *Mere Christianity*, uses the imagery of dancing to describe the very life of God himself. Lewis states that "God is not a static thing – not even a person – but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance." Lewis uses the imagery of a dance to explain the very life of God, the very life of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the very life of God that is a dance of mutual love between them. The Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are eternally pouring love and joy and adoration into each other, just like partners in a dance. C.S. Lewis continues by stating that this divine dance "matters more than anything else in the whole world. The whole dance, or drama, of [the Trinity's life] is to be played out in each one of us... Joy, power, peace and eternal life are a great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very centre of reality."

is into this divine dance, this dance of pure love and affection, it is into the very life of the Trinity that we get a glimpse into in our readings today from the Gospel of Mark and from Genesis. In our reading from Mark we hear the story of Jesus' Baptism, we hear the story of Jesus, the Son of God, descending into the water of the Jordan River, descending into the baptism of John, and as he comes out of the water we hear that the heavens were torn apart and that the Spirit of God descending like a dove upon him. As the spirit alights upon Jesus the voice of the Father resonates in the air "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." As Jesus comes out of the

water he is covered by the Father's words of love, just at the very same time that the Holy Spirit is covering him with power. In this short but significant story we get a deep glimpse into the divine life, the divine dance of God. We get a glimpse into the love the Father has for the Son, we get a glimpse into how the Spirit of God relates to Father and Son, and we get a glimpse into how the Son receives the love of the Father. The baptism of Jesus is one of the few places in the Bible where we see Father, Son and Holy Spirit distinctly acting and so it is one of the few places where we can get a full glimpse of the dynamic and divine dance that is the life of God.

It is this dance of love and joy which poured forth at creation, as the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters, and it is the dance of love and joy that we are all created to participate in. We were all made to enter into a divine dance with God, and we are all invited into that dance in Baptism. Later in Mark, Jesus says to his disciples "the baptism with which I am baptised, you will be baptized." To be baptized means to follow Jesus, to be baptised means to follow Jesus into the divine life of God, to follow Jesus into the dance that we have all been destined for from the creation of the world.

In the liturgy of baptism we mark the end of our old lives when we declare the three renunciations and we mark the beginning of our entrance into the divine dance lived in God's grace and forgiveness as we make the three affirmations. In the liturgy of baptism we receive God's eternal covenant with us, God's promises to us made in Jesus Christ. We are all invited to share in Christ's baptism, we are all invited to die with him in the water of baptism and to rise again to new and everlasting life. Just as Jesus was covered by the Father's words of love, in baptism we are all invited into the Father's words: In baptism each of us can be called the beloved of God, in baptism each of us can be called a son or daughter of God, in we are all the one in which God is well pleased. Just as Jesus was covered by the power of the Holy Spirit, we too are invited to share in the life and power of the Holy Spirit. We are invited to pray in the confidence that Spirit intercedes for us, we are invited to do justice and seek righteousness in the knowledge that God grants us the strength to do it, we are invited to dance the exuberant and life giving divine dance that is at the centre of the divine life of God.

I must admit that I am still not a particularly talented dancer, and I still don't dance very often, though the sheer joy and wonder I experience dancing through the kitchen with my daughters or with Bethany reminds me of dynamic and life-giving nature of dance. In those moments as I twirl and spin my daughters in delight, I am reminded that we are all invited to share in the same delight of the divine dance, that we are all called to experience the thrill, and joy, and power and peace of the God's divine dance, which is ultimately the life of the Triune God. As we think on our baptisms or as we long for baptism, remember the divine dance, remember that just as a dance is full of steps, full of music, full of sweat and full of the interplay between partners, so too is our life of discipleship. We are called to a dynamic life of discipleship, following the Son of God, Jesus Christ the one who invites each and every one of us into the eternal and life giving dance of God:

*They cut me down and I leapt up high
I am the life that will never, never die
I'll live in you if you'll live in me
I am the Lord of the dance, said he*

*Dance, dance, wherever you may be
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