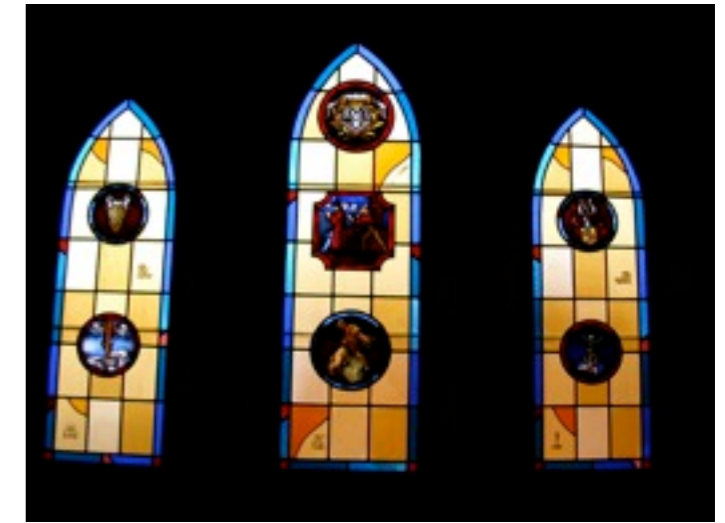


Harry Potter, vampires, and living faithfully

27 February 2011

All Saints Church, Minnetonka



religious experience no longer looks *only* like this



it also looks like this (representations of religious experience)



and also like this (pop culture renditions of theological themes)

what is real? how do we know?



challenges brought by *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* (as examples)

what is real?

- we know through sensory experience
- we know through our feelings
- we know through what we believe
- we know through discernment in community
- we confess the Bible is true

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the Bible tells us

- human experience matters deeply
- human experience is also broken, sinful, capable of deception
- evil is very real
- God is always and ever in relationship with us
- everything comes from God, we cannot control God



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CITY**

so what do we do?

we learn to discern in community

Lutheran hints

- law and Gospel
- saint and sinner
- theology of the cross
- emphasis on goodness of embodied life, and the ways in which the ordinary mediates God's self-disclosure
- look back towards our predecessors in history



evil is...

- refusing to name God
- seeking to compel God
- acting without regard for God
- real





evil is real, magic is evil (because it seeks to compel God), but being drawn to God and relationship through fiction is good; so when Harry Potter and other fictional stories move us to connect, that is part of God's created work, and we participate in Creation in good ways



vampires are evil because they cheat death, and thus deny God — but coming to know more of God's love through *feeling* the depth of sacrifice in the *Twilight* stories and connecting that experience with stories of God can be real and good (feeling in stories leads to resonance and affirmation of truth)

what is real?

- feelings are real
- being drawn into deeper feeling for God's Creation is real
- being drawn into deeper empathy and relationship is part of God's Creative activity in the world
- but because sin is real, we need to do discernment *in community*



community

- those we know and live with
- those around us in our neighborhoods and globally
- those before us in time
- those who lived with Jesus and shared their knowing in the Bible
- even those we call enemy



remember

- critical acceptance of the secular (2 kingdoms)
- because we are prone to err badly...
- we favor intellectual humility
- we favor approaches that serve the neighbor



so what might we do?

- start by learning our own stories well, because being able to see the resonance with the Bible requires knowing the Bible
- the tradition offers some help (Lutheran documents, Catholic cliff's notes) [http://www.luthersem.edu/mhess/web/Faith_Sense.html]
- we can become more intentional about our media diet [http://www.luthersem.edu/mhess/web/24_7_News.html]
- we need to attend to our practices -- in terms of media, in terms of politics, in terms of religion [http://www.luthersem.edu/mhess/web/Media_Spiritualities.html]



people are creating in their own contexts



introducing and nurturing communities

“our job is to discern how to make affirmations in a world of ambiguity, how to deal with uncertainty in an uncertain world. That involves reliance on God, not because God resolves our ambiguities into clear-cut, iron-clad certainties that circumvent our travails, but because in turning to God we enter a Way...”

AKM Adams

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