

1. Opening Prayer

2. Intro: Body Theology

a. Early Christianity's Wholeness vs. Dualism

The body had been condemned, and the soul had lost God's image.

The incarnated Christ (perfect human and perfect God) saved both body and soul.

b. The Middle Age's Mysticism

Mysticism was not about isolation from the materialistic world but going into the world and finding out God in the world. God was not invisible but visible in body and blood. Relics were believed to contain divine power that enables humanity to have intimate relationship with eternity. Ambivalent notion on the body.

c. Modern Christianity's Ethical and Psychological Perspectives (Karl Barth)

The incarnated Christ as the arbitrator was the great miracle/gift for the humanity.

The incarnation indicates divine presence among humanity. In other words, holiness in the secular world.

d. Postmodern Christianity's Reinterpretations (Sallie McFague)

Incarnation as interdependent relationship between the divinity and the humanity.

Incarnation as invitation into Trinity.

Christianity as the religion of the body (God as the embodied spirit of the universe.)

3. Let us read John 1:1-14 (from UMC discipleship)

a. How would John 1:14 echo back to how God related to the people of God in the wilderness?

b. What might it mean that God has chosen to be among us as Jesus (one who was fully human and also fully divine)?

c. How does the passage in John foreshadow what will come in the life and death of Jesus?

d. What do you think John meant by describing Jesus as "full of grace and truth" in verse 14? How do we allow Jesus to impart grace and truth in our life? How do other believers (past and present, near and far) help us to get a fuller picture of Jesus?

e. How does our relationship with Jesus help us to experience life in all its fullness? How does it help us celebrate the meaning of Christmas?

4. Closing Prayer

From Sallie McFague's book "The Body of God" (texts from www.cac.org)

We have suggested that God as the embodied spirit of the universe is a personal/organic model that is compatible with interpretations of both Christian faith and contemporary science, although not demanded by either. It is a way of speaking of God's relation to all matter, all creation, that "makes sense" in terms of an incarnational understanding of Christianity and an organic interpretation of postmodern science. It helps us to be whole people within our faith and within our contemporary world. Moreover, the model does not reduce God to the world nor relegate God to another world; on the contrary, it radicalizes both divine immanence (God is the breath of each and every creature) and divine transcendence (God is the energy empowering the entire universe). Finally, it underscores our bodiliness, our concrete physical existence and experience that we share with all other creatures: it is a model on the side of the well-being of the planet, for it raises the issue of ethical regard toward all bodies as all are interrelated and interdependent. . . .

Whatever happens, says our model, happens to God also and not just to us. The body of God, shaped by the Christic paradigm, is also the cosmic Christ—the loving, compassionate God on the side of those who suffer, especially the vulnerable and excluded. All are included, not only in their liberation and healing, but also in their defeat and despair. Even as the life-giving breath extends to all bodies in the universe, so also does the liberating, healing, and suffering love of God. The resurrected Christ is the cosmic Christ, the Christ freed from the body of Jesus of Nazareth, to be present in and to all bodies. The New Testament appearance stories attest to the continuing empowerment of the Christic paradigm in the world: the liberating, inclusive love of God for all is alive in and through the entire cosmos. We are not alone as we attempt to practice the ministry of inclusion, for the power of God is incarnate throughout the world, erupting now and then where the vulnerable are liberated and healed, as well as where they are not.