

“Some Children See Him”
December 24, 2019
St. Paul’s UCC Church
Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy

What might happen if we started to see ourselves, and everyone else, as holy?

This is the question I’ve been chewing on ever since Dualla told me about a Christmas song called “Some Children See Him.”

Do you know this song? It’s a great song (thank you, Dualla!). The song was written in 1951 by a guy named Albert Burt, though I’ve become most familiar with James Taylor’s 2004 recording of it for his Christmas Album. It’s such a good song, ahead of its time really.

The first verse introduces the concept: though many of us (here) probably imagine Jesus as white, other children see him differently – as bronzed and brown, for example. *Some children see Him lily white / The baby Jesus born this night / Some children see Him lily white With tresses soft and fair. / Some children see Him bronzed and brown / The Lord of heav'n to earth come down. / Some children see Him bronzed and brown/ With dark and heavy hair.”*¹

I don’t know about you, but I grew up with “white Jesus” everywhere. White Jesus as a baby, white Jesus as a shepherd, white Jesus on the cross, white Jesus looking a lot like, well, me. Which is fine, but I appreciate this song because I need to be reminded that Jesus didn’t necessarily look like me. Born a Palestinian Jew, he was probably much closer to brown than my color.

But the second verse goes even deeper: *“Some children see Him almond-eyed / This Savior whom we kneel beside. / Some children see Him almond-eyed With skin of golden hue. / Some children see Him dark as they Sweet Mary's Son to whom we pray. / Some children see him dark as they And, oh they love Him too.”*²

As introduced in the first verse, children – and all humans, really – tend to imagine Jesus looking like they do. But this verse also tells us that we not only *imagine* him looking like us, we also *pray to him* looking like us. We *worship* him looking like us. We *love and adore* him looking like us.

What this means to me is this: *the God we love can look like us*. God is not just an angry old white bearded man in the sky, but God is also a baby. A vulnerable baby.

What might it mean to love, worship and adore not only a powerful, strong, omnipotent God, but also a God who is vulnerable, weak, and tender?

But the last verse really clinches it for me: *“The children in each different place / Will see the baby Jesus' face / Like theirs, but bright, with heavenly grace / And filled with holy light.*

¹ Song “Some Children See Him,” composed by Alfred Burt, 1951.

² *Ibid.*

*/ Oh lay aside each earthly thing / And with thy heart as offering/ Come worship now the infant King / 'Tis love that's born tonight.”*³

So: not only does Jesus look like us – whatever we might look like – but *we can look like Jesus*. In the face of the holy one, we see our own holiness shining back at us.

Each one of us is a reflection of the divine. Which gets me back to my very first question: What might happen if we started to see ourselves, and everyone else, as holy?

I've been noticing lately how violent I can be with myself – I don't mean physically, thanks be to God, but how violently I can talk to myself: “What's wrong with you, Mary Beth? Why did you do that? Don't you know better?” Man, I am hard on myself. Or can be. Maybe you are too.

But... what if I started to see myself as holy, as sacred, as containing the same divine spark as the Christ-child?

And taking it a bit further, what if I started seeing others that way, too? Yes, Jesus looks like me, and I look like him... but *you* look like him too. And so does a Black child. And so does a Syrian child. And so does a homeless and hungry child. And so does a child separated from her parents at the borders of our country. All of these children – all of these humans – contain the divine spark. All of them, all of us, look a lot like Jesus.

How might our world change if we started seeing ourselves, and others, that way? I mean it. Really: what might happen if we started to see ourselves, and others, as holy?

Some children see Him lily white The baby Jesus born this night

Some children see Him lily white With tresses soft and fair

Some children see Him bronzed and brown The Lord of heav'n to earth come down

Some children see Him bronzed and brown With dark and heavy hair

Some children see Him almond-eyed This Savior whom we kneel beside

Some children see Him almond-eyed With skin of golden hue

Some children see Him dark as they Sweet Mary's Son to whom we pray

Some children see him dark as they And, oh they love Him too

The children in each different place Will see the baby Jesus' face

Like theirs, but bright, with heavenly grace And filled with holy light

Oh lay aside each earthly thing And with thy heart as offering

*Come worship now the infant King 'Tis love that's born tonight*⁴

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*