

A Sermon Preached at Maple Street Congregational Church, UCC
Danvers, MA
Rev. Kevin M Smith
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Cosmic Love

Have you every wondered what the last name of Jesus was? Did you ever learn in Sunday School the surname of Jesus?

It may surprise people, but Jesus was not born with the last name or surname of Christ. Jesus, who lived in Nazareth when he was physically walking this earth, may have been known to strangers who met him as Jesus of Nazareth, like John of Patmos and other people who were known by the place where their family resided. I'm Kevin from Fairfield and there is Alden of Danvers.

Most likely, though, Jesus was known more intimately by his father's name. In the time of Jesus and his disciples he was probably known as Jeshua ben Joseph or Joshua ben Joseph. "Ben" indicating that Jesus was the "son of" a Jewish man named Joseph.

We are soon to be heading into the Advent season. The Advent season of the church in our church year precedes the Easter season. We are currently in the time called "Ordinary" time. Frankly, I think there is nothing ever ordinary about the time we live with God and each other. Every day brings something new, every sunrise, and another chance to begin again. But, in theological terms Jeshua ben Joseph didn't become known as Jesus the Christ until after his execution on the cross and his resurrection. There is a pre-Easter Jesus and a post-Easter Jesus.

And, then, there is the "logos." The logos we find discussed in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, "in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God," etc. John posits that Jesus the Christ, once known as Jeshua ben Joseph, actually existed in spiritual form as the Word or Logos of all that exists.

What John was writing about was the being known as the "Cosmic Christ." One of my favorite theologians and priests is Fr. Richard Rohr (R-O-H-R). If you want to read meditations on healthy Christian and spiritual living, look for any of his books. He writes with great insight and inspiration for us all. Fr. Rohr wrote:

The first and cosmic incarnation of the Eternal Christ, the perfect co-inherence of matter and Spirit (Ephesians 1:3-11), happened at the Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago. Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the human incarnation of that same Mystery a mere 2,000 years ago, when we were perhaps ready for this revelation. Christ is not Jesus' last name, but the title of his historical and cosmic purpose. Jesus presents himself as the "Anointed" or Christened One who was human and divine united in one human body—as our model and exemplar. (Fr. Rohr writes that) Peter seems to get this, at least once (Matthew 16:16), but like most of the church, he also seems to regress. Christ is our shortcut word for "The Body of God" or "God materialized." [2] This Christ is much bigger and older than either Jesus of Nazareth or the Christian religion, because the Christ is whenever

the material and the divine co-exist—which is always and everywhere.
(<https://cac.org/the-cosmic-christ-2015-11-05/>)

I think that is a beautiful concept that opens up the love and immanent presence of God to every living thing. We are told that we were “born in the image of God.” I think that means, too, that essentially we are all spiritual beings, beloved by God, who also inhabits matter, or a physical body.

Do you know what this means? This means, my friends, that every one of you is capable of transcending in the here and now the “self” that you thought limited you. Because our children that we baptized this morning, and the people that you are, are spiritual beings loved by a Christ who is not just local, not just present in religion, not owned by any one faith and every one of us is capable of transcending the limitations that human culture tries to place upon us.

I’m sure you have heard that we “belong to Christ.” I believe we, each one of us, belongs to that perfect melding of matter and spirit, whose energizing force is love. When you love someone, you transcend your selfish being. For to love someone requires that you sacrifice just what you need or want for what you both need. When you work for justice for the oppressed people of the world, you transcend yourself. When you help a stranger, expecting absolutely nothing in return, you transcend yourself and display your true identity as part of the cosmic loving Christ that was, and is, and ever shall be.

As our Easter song goes, “Jesus Christ has risen today,” and today, and tomorrow, and all the tomorrows throughout eternity. Choose, my friends, to live into that image of God’s love that you all were born into. May you all live into the “endless energy, boundless strength” given to you at your birth. Let Advent, our sacred period of watching and waiting for the Christ presence proceed! Amen.