



## CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Please be seated.

Again, for those of you who came in a little late. Bishop Doyle was coming to preach this sermon to celebrate the 10th anniversary of my becoming the rector of Christ Church Cranbrook. He is currently in the Somerset Inn recovering from something he picked up maybe on the plane. And we wish him well and we are so grateful that he came this far. And that's just one of the great blessings of Bishop Doyle and his wife Joanne. They are just such a treasure to us. And this is the sermon he wrote, and this is the sermon I'm going to give.

Some 30 years ago I met Bill Danaher. On a regular basis, we prayed daily together in community. We took classes, discussed a lot of theology, drank coffee together, and shared meals with Joanne and Claire. We are friends and we are kin in Christ Jesus. It is kinship that our gospel sounds a resounding note about today. It is the kinship that is so very important to this gospel. Kinship is the reality that God brings us together. God has made us to be together, to live together. Yes, to marry but more importantly, in Mark's mindset, to be kin. But also to be drawn to God and to not get in the way of those who are also drawn to God. It is the getting in the way part, the frustrating thing about kinship that is primary to this gospel lesson.

The church did not concern itself with marriage or make it a sacrament until the 12th century. So do this for a moment. For a moment, raise your eyes, finding God. Sorry, I got my pages out of – just looking for page five. Here we go. All right, let's start from the beginning. That was good. For a moment raise your eyes and thoughts out of the idea that this passage is about marriage and think of it in terms of life together. That God wants us to be together as kin, as friends. God joins us together. It is only we who pull ourselves apart or who keep others from finding God. We are the ones who either follow the way or get in the way.

In my understanding, kinship is framed as a powerful theological concept that transcends political boundaries and social divisions. It is not merely a familial connection, a marriage or relationship with children. It is not merely a cultural bond. Rather, it embodies a radical inclusive sense of belonging that aligns with the Christian understanding of being part of the body of Christ. Kinship in this context involves recognizing the dignity and shared humanity of every person,

calling for relationships that are marked by mutual care, compassion, and solidarity.

Kinship is grounded in the teachings of Jesus and the kingdom of God, where traditional barriers of race, class, nationality, or ideology are broken down. It insists on a reorientation of allegiance from worldly structures to the transformative counter-cultural community that God envisions, God imagines, that God invites us into.

In practical terms, this kinship calls for active engagement in social justice. Reconciliation and acts of mercy as expressions of this interconnectedness. In kinship, we inhabit an identity that transcends individualism and fosters a communal way of life. It's an embodied practice where the reality of God's love and justice is made manifest through acts of inclusion, hospitality, and shared struggle against marginalization. This vision of kinship requires not only understanding, it is also a reordering of life to see all relationships as reflections of divine love and interconnectedness.

In this way, we read the text and we understand a greater meaning for all of us. We cannot dismiss one another. We are made to be together. We are invited to see our true kinship outside of our familial boundaries. We do not join ourselves together, but instead God joins us together. When we seek to dismiss one another, we are breaking the commandment to love God and each other.

Who are we to stop people from coming to God? We are drawn to God by our very curiosity that is within us, that longing for, resting, and waiting in the Lord, as Augustine once believed. So we cannot dismiss or stop each other so easily, for God will call and people will come, and most likely they will not be people of our choosing. Moreover, kinship means that we are disrupted by them and we are to be disrupted by them.

So here am I disrupting you, kin of Bill. Invited by your clergy and discovering now that you and I are deeply connected. For how can we not be? We are connected through Christ and through Bill's life.

Let me tell you a short story. I have told this before, but not here. One night I was talking to a dear and close friend. I was so tired, that kind of face plant in your food, tired. And before we hung up I said, I love you. There was a long pause as I had never said this before and then came back. I love you too, Andy. To be kin is to find a deeper love. It is, as theologian Sam Wells says, about being with each other. I love Bill and I tell him that. I love Claire and I tell her that. We are kin.

So I look at you in this moment and I see you. I see you with all of the life trails flowing out of you, like memories pulled from Dumbledore's pensieve, your stories of this past week and the pilgrim tales of your life. And I say to you as my

brothers, my sisters, my siblings, I love you. I love you. How could I not with Christ as my witness? With Christ as my testimony, how could I not love you as Bill loves you? Here is the true joy of life.

I invite you in this 10th year of your life together to go deeper into your kinship, rooted in the Gospel of Christ Jesus, and to learn to love each other more deeply. Love your kin not here today. Love your kin who are in your neighborhood. Love your kin in this city of Detroit. So practice the presence of God that you can say, I love you and I'm grateful for you, to those you know, and to those you come upon each day.

Amen.

Will you join me in thanking Bishop Doyle for his sermon?