

**A Contemporary Reading:** *Coherence and Belonging* by Richard Rohr

The kind of wholeness I'm describing as the Universal Christ is a forgotten treasure of the Christian Tradition that our postmodern world no longer enjoys and even vigorously denies. I always wonder why, after the rise of rationalism in the Enlightenment, Westerners would prefer such incoherence. I thought we had agreed that coherence, pattern, and some final meaning were good. But intellectuals in the last century have denied the existence and power of such great wholeness—and in Christianity, we have made the mistake of limiting the Creator's presence to just one human manifestation, Jesus.

The implications of our selective seeing have been massively destructive for history and humanity. Creation was deemed profane, a pretty accident, a mere backdrop for the real drama of God's concern—which we narcissistically assumed is always and only us humans. It is impossible to make individuals feel sacred inside of a profane, empty, or accidental universe. This way of seeing makes us feel separate and competitive, striving to be superior instead of deeply connected and in search of ever-larger circles of union.

I believe God loves things by becoming them. God loves things by uniting with them, not by excluding them. Through the act of creation, God manifested the eternally out-flowing Divine Presence into the physical and material world. Ordinary matter is the hiding place for Spirit and thus the very Body of God. Honestly, what else could it be, if we believe—as orthodox Jews, Christians, and Muslims do—that “one God created all things”? Since the very beginning of time, God's Spirit has been revealing its glory and goodness through the physical creation. So many of the Psalms assert this, speaking of “rivers clapping their hands” and “mountains singing for joy.”

When Paul wrote, “There is only Christ. He is everything and he is in everything” (Colossians 3:11), was he a naïve pantheist or did he really understand the full implication of the Gospel of Incarnation?

God seems to have chosen to manifest the invisible in what we call the “visible,” so that all things visible are the revelation of God’s endlessly diffusive spiritual energy. Once a person recognises that, it is hard to ever be lonely in this world again.

*(Adapted from Richard Rohr, The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For, and Believe)*

For words of insight in contemporary spirituality

***Thanks be to God.***

**Gospel:** A reading from the Gospel of Mark 3:21-35

When Jesus' relatives heard of this, they went out to take charge of him, thinking that he had lost his mind.

The religious scholars who had come down from Jerusalem said of Jesus, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and, "He casts out demons through the ruler of demons."

Summoning them, Jesus spoke in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a realm is torn by civil strife, it cannot last. If a household is divided according to loyalties, it will not survive. Similarly, if Satan has suffered mutiny in the ranks and is torn by dissension, the Devil is finished and cannot endure. No attacker can enter a stronghold unless the defender is first put under restraint. Only then can the attacker plunder the stronghold.

"The truth is, every sin and all the blasphemy the people utter will be forgiven, but those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness. They are guilty of an eternal sin." Jesus spoke all this because they said, "He is possessed by an unclean spirit."

Jesus' mother and brothers arrived and sent in a message asking for him. A crowd was sitting around Jesus, and they said to him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? Who is my family?" And looking around at everyone there, Jesus said, "This is my family! Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my sister, my brother, my mother."

For words of challenge and encouragement

***Thanks be to God.***