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Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, CA Y49
Evensong 29 – St. Lucy
Thursday December 13, 2018

Psalm 131
Solomon 6: 1-9
John 1:9-13

Bending the Map

"To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God..." (John 1).

You can't help but sympathize with the title character in the musical Dear Evan Hanson. Evan is so socially awkward. He has enormous difficulty making friends. Evan's therapist requires him to write an encouraging letter to himself every day. One day at school he is printing out one of these letters to himself when the school bully snatches the paper and puts it in his pocket.

It seems like a total disaster. But then in a bizarre turn of events the bully takes his own life. When the parents find Evan's letter in their son's pocket, they assume that the two boys had been friends and reach out to him.

This story concerns a new reality in our society. Today young people have two separate lives in a way that they never quite did before. Often what happens to them and how they look online matters just as much as real life. Parents who did not grow up with these technologies don't know what to do. Young people are just as much at a loss. For that matter everyone is.

Technology has changed. This affects our jobs, elections, what we read, listen to and buy. It changes our identity, politics, international relations, our sense of satisfaction, who we choose as our friends and pretty much everything else.

Search and rescue experts use an expression to describe the early stages of being lost. They call it "bending the map." At first a person may not even believe that they are lost. Reality doesn't exactly match the map but they don't really notice it yet. They make excuses for how a mountain or a lake on the map doesn't match the actual landscape.¹

I think as a civilization we are bending the map when it comes to technology. We keep talking and acting as if we were in the old world even though so much has changed. We never seem to be honest about what is happening.

The Prologue to the Gospel of John addresses us. It says, "the true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world

came into being through him; yet the world did not know him... But to all who received him, who believed in his name he gave power to become children of God" (John 1).

Jesus is this light. In the simplest terms he knew God so intimately that he realized something that changed all history. Every person is a child of God. Every person has infinite dignity and value. No one like you has existed from the beginning of the world until now. This is bedrock truth, no matter how much technology changes.

At any moment of the day you will see people in this Cathedral. Some are tourists, others are Anglicans from distant places, some are our neighbors looking for quiet and beauty. Many come because they carry burdens. Our Cathedral chaplains and greeters meet them and care for them. They share the good news that nothing needs to stand between God and us.

Let me read the second part of a poem about Jerusalem by the Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai called "Tourists."²

Once I sat on the steps by a gate at David's Tower,
I placed my two heavy baskets at my side. A group of tourists
was standing around their guide and I became their target marker. "You see
that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch
from the Roman period. Just right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!"

I said to myself: redemption will come only if their guide tells them,
"You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but next to it,
left and down a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and vegetables for his family."

There is such a great power that comes from really seeing someone. It is true of Evan Hanson, the poet with the baskets and everyone in a world convulsed by technological change. Thank you for letting the light of Christ shine in your words and actions.

¹ John Edward Huth, *The Lost Art of Finding Our Way* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013) 30=1.

² Yehuda Amichai, "Tourists"

Visits of condolence is all we get from them.
They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,
They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall
And they laugh behind heavy curtains
In their hotels.
They have their pictures taken
Together with our famous dead

At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb
And on Ammunition Hill.
They weep over our sweet boys
And lust after our tough girls
And hang up their underwear
To dry quickly
In cool, blue bathrooms.

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