

May 12, 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Who is God? We talk about God. We pray to God. We worship and sing our praises to God. But, who is God? The answer is, of course, no one really knows. Or perhaps we might know in a way beyond words. If we believe there is something above and beyond the world of our own experience, a cosmic force, a creative power, a guiding goodness, Creator of the cosmos, the ground of being, the spirit of life, we will *long to understand* the nature and character of the creator. And yet we know that (in this life) our understanding will always be limited, incomplete.

As the Psalmist proclaims: “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praise. His greatness is unsearchable.” Or as the Lord declares to the Prophet Isaiah: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts are beyond your thoughts.”

Jesus says: “The Father and I are one.” It seems a bit ironic, on this day we celebrate mothers, that we focus on God as “Father.” I believe (but for the sway of history and language and cultural context) Jesus might as well have talked about God as “Mother.” For he was not so much telling us that God has a gender, but that God is **personal**. That God is much more a someone than a something. That God can relate to us in a way as personal and intimate as a Loving Parent. This is part of the genius, the unique wisdom, of the Christian faith. That the mysterious and majestic creator of all things, the maker of vast galaxies, of suns and stars and planets, of being itself, can know us a person, can relate to us, can engage with us, can love us as a father or mother loves their child. What a remarkable spiritual insight. But why *wouldn't it* be so? If distant stars, sub-atomic particles, and the hundred million neurons of the human brain are the expression of a creative God, why would that God *not also* be the source of one of the most profound dimensions of creation: **relationship**; the ability to connect and engage; communicate, and love. Why would the God who is majestic beyond understanding *not also* be *personal*?

We are human. We have doubts and fears. We do not always feel God's presence. We wonder sometimes where God is. In our Gospel lesson today Jesus gives us a hint of how we might feel close to God, to the One he knows as Father. “Hear my voice,” he says. “Follow me.” Those who are of my fold, sheep of the Good Shepherd: *hear my voice*. I know them and they follow me. But what does that voice say and *how* do we *follow* in his way? Jesus told us many things in his earthly life. He told us who he was: “God so

loved the world that he gave his only Son." "I am the way and the truth and the life." He seemed especially concerned for those in need: "Blessed are the poor." "What you have don't for the least of these, you have done for me." In mysterious parables, he clothed wise insights about God's kingdom. Most of all, he commanded us to love. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, you soul, and your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And a second is just like it (its equal): You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself." "Love one another as I have loved you." "Love (even) your enemies that you may be children of your Father in heaven."

But what does it mean to love? What does it mean to love others that we may know who God is, that we may experience God as *someone who loves us*?

There are many people in this congregation doing wonderful things in the spirit of Christ. *Testifying* by the works they do *in God's name*. I met with a group of these Trinity volunteers a couple weeks ago. We talked about *why* they were sharing their time with others; what *meaning* they'd found; what it *meant* to them. Over and over, you could see the sparkle in their eyes, the excitement in their voices, the tears on their cheeks. "The *best thing* I've ever done," they said. "it makes me *spiritually alive*," they said. "I feel closer *to God*," they said. There's not a guarantee. Service is not a *quid pro quo*.. And it need not be *in these ministries* or *through* this church. But when we *give* of ourselves to someone *in need*; when we open our *own hearts* to another; we often *catch a glimpse* of *God* in that experience. When we hear and respond to *the voice* of *Jesus* calling us to *follow* in his way *of love*, many, many time we benefit as *much* as the *one* we have come to serve. And we may *come to know* in *that encounter* a little more of *who God is*. As God loves us, we are called to *love others*. And in *so doing*, we may *meet* God *who is love*. Jesus said: "The Father and I are one." One in spirit; one in person; one in love. He is our Shepherd, the one who calls us to hear his voice and follow in his way; his way of compassion; his way of service; his way of *being there* for others; his way of *becoming more deeply humans*; his way of *knowing God*; his way of *love*. For *there* is our *meaning*. There is *our hope*. There is our *peace*. There is *our life*. *There* is our *eternity*.

Amen.

Wishing you the peace of Christ,

Pastor Terry Anderson