

God Every Which Way

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 06/16/19
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When the ancient Hebrews were freed from the bonds of Pharaoh and were at last free in the wilderness, they asked, "Is the Lord with us, or not?"

Maybe not at this moment – maybe not at this point in your life – but I think everyone asks the same question as those ancient Hebrews. "And if God is indeed among us, *how?*"

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit signify that God is pure relationship. A symbol for the Trinity is three interlocked circles – love intertwined. The Trinity is a belief about what makes God, God. God's perfection is in God's closeness rather than in God's distance.

God is the waiting, seeking, searching, creative Parent.

Jesus told a story about a father who had two sons. One asked for his inheritance, and his father gave it to him. When the prodigal son had blown his inheritance, the father welcomed him back and threw a party. And when the older son pouted because he never got a party, the father didn't give him a party; he gave him everything.

Then there was the one about the guy in the ditch who was passed over by all the religious people who kept their distance. But this member of ISIS stopped; risked his own life to help; ripped up his shirt to make bandages, took him to the hospital and gave them his VISA account number to pay the balance due.

This God is relational and extravagant.

When Jesus first came among us, Jesus challenged how people thought about God. Lots of people looked at Jesus, listened to his preaching, witnessed his work, saw his death, and said, "That's not God. God is powerful and "out there."

Jesus simply didn't measure up to what or who they conceived God to be.

You see, in Jesus Christ, God refused to remain a theory or a high sounding principle. Jesus Christ is God in motion toward us. God did not sit on high, serenely pronouncing, "I love you."

One of the criticisms leveled at Jesus was that he "welcomes sinners and eats with them." Jesus intruded sometimes where he was not wanted. The thing that upset Jesus' critics was not that Jesus loved people but that Jesus actively received, ate with, and thereby loved "the wrong" people.

People will say to me once in a while, "Well, I'm not very religious, but I do believe in God, and isn't that what it's all about?"

The only problem is that once we discover that God was working in and through Christ, things get complicated – not because the church wanted to make the simple faith of Jesus confusing -- but rather because we discovered in Jesus, God was at once much more interesting and demanding than we had first thought.

In the Letter to the Church in Ephesus we hear "Jesus made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us."

Here is an active, living, loving God who brings together and breaks barriers. When the far off one who has been brought near is you; when the wall that has been kicked down is the wall that you built in a vain attempt to keep God at bay, then you know the God who would say, as Jesus says in today's lesson from John's Gospel: "I'm going to send the Holy Spirit to make sure we stay constantly connected."

I understand the Holy Spirit to be God present with us, NOW! This is the Spirit that empowers us to do things we didn't think we could do on our own.

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In today's first lesson from the Book of Proverbs, wisdom is personified as a woman who sits by the city gate and calls out to those entering the gate. In Proverbs, wisdom, the idea of the Good Life is said to be a gift of God. And here in the 8th chapter of Proverbs, wisdom is thought as a woman who calls out to people, urging them to enrich their lives by taking what she says, seriously.'

That's not the way we usually think of Wisdom. We usually think wisdom as a set of abstract ideas or noble principles. But here, Wisdom is regarded as a person who reaches out to us; who calls to us, and invites us to seek God.

If you have listened to today's sermon, you will know nothing more about the theological underpinning for the Christian idea of the Trinity. But what I hope you do come away with today, is knowing that God wants to know you – not abstractly or theoretically – but as a Trinity reaching out to us, wanting to embrace us, even when we feel we're not good enough for that.

Be warned. Take heed. Keep looking over your shoulder! Pay attention to what happens to you this week! Like a magnet; like the seeking shepherd; the searching woman or the waiting father, God wants you at all cost.

In the name of the Parent, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.