



The Sea Star



PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

"It is interesting to me that the people of God did not learn their religion, or what they came fiercely to believe about God, by speculation or philosophy."

Dear Friends in Christ:

I hope you're fully enjoying the summer, and some of the breaks and opportunities summer can provide: maybe time for vacation, or visiting friends, or going to the beach or other special places.

Some of our spiritual disciplines are likely to relax during the summer (some of our small groups choose to close down until September; it's tough to meet with your mentor if you or s/he is out of town) but we can always pray and study some portion of the Scriptures each day. (Portable spiritual disciplines—how handy!)

The deepest roots of our faith tradition go back millennia to the people of God experiencing the God who called them and chose them and spoke to them. In turn they reflected upon the faithfulness and the character of this One God. (Our praying and studying the Bible each day happen to mirror these ancient ways in which God's covenant people apprehended the One God whom we have encountered in Jesus, the living Word. We communicate with God through the Holy Spirit in prayer, and we learn of the relationship and history between God and the Israelites and the world as we study the Scriptures.)

It's interesting to me that the people of God did not learn their religion, or what they came fiercely to believe about God, by speculation or philosophy. Instead, God spoke to them (some of them) and told them who He is. At the burning bush God approached Moses, who had two questions for God. The first was about him, Moses ("Who am I that I should be your messenger to Pharaoh?") and the second was about God ("When they ask me what is your name, what shall I tell them?" Ex 3:10-14.) To the first, God (skirting Moses' question) answered, "I will be with you." To the second, God answered, "I AM," or "I AM WHO I AM."

Over the next five or six centuries, a number of core truths about God emerged for the covenant people of God. God did not

PASTORS PONDERINGS

continued from page 1...

specify the ramifications of His being “the God Who Is” but before long it became clear: there is no other God in all the universe like God. Israel also learned not to fear or worship any other god(s); I believe this understanding to give all their trust and allegiance to One alone was the first and only such by any people in any ancient religion.

They also learned that the One God replaced or at least ruled over all the forces of nature. This God of Israel was never equated with nature, but if there were no rain gods or fertility gods or household gods it eventually became obvious that all the other gods were the product of the human imagination—or, more pathetically, the product of their hands and workbenches. (Hence the recurring theme in Isaiah, for example, “To whom then will you liken God . . . to an idol? A workman casts it, a goldsmith overlays it with gold . . . then seeks out a skilled artisan to set up an image that will not topple.” 40:18-20)

The people of God, unlike other ancient peoples, never needed to speculate as to the origins of God, the “I AM.” (Enough said, I suppose.) Again—think of the myriad stories of Mount Olympus or other ethnic mythologies as to how all the gods or goddesses came into being—the Israelites were quite atypical.) They also learned—maybe from the second commandment—that they could not represent God by any visual image. There is nothing in all creation enough like God to serve to represent Him—certainly no golden calf or portrait in oils.

This insight, that God could never be portrayed in a picture or statue, led to other important ones. A painting (or “graven image” on a rock tablet, as the case may be) is enduring and stable. If God cannot or will not be known visually, He will be known primarily through His spoken word. Even today He is known best through relationship, through trust. Sound, or voice, at least before recording devices, disappeared in a moment. God would be known in the encounter, as He was alive and speaking and present to persons. He would not be known in any kind of recorded visual, and therefore dead, image.

It also followed then that God alone was the living God, unlike any gods or goddesses or idols who could be reduced to or characterized by their own images. Every other god, every created being including humans was dead or soon to be dead. God was not wood or stone; not even flesh and blood. God is the God over life.

These are considerations which the people Israel had realized some six centuries before the living Word, Jesus, became a human being to reveal God more immediately among us. We today have even more opportunity to experience the living God than had ancient Israel. The Holy Spirit has been poured out; we can learn about and pray to Jesus the Christ. We can study the Scriptures, including the New Testament. Even as we’re enjoying the rhythms and maybe the rest of summer, we can still enter more deeply into life-changing relationship with the God Who Is. The God who loves every person.

God bless you,
Chip



OTHER

STUFF

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Byron Bahr	7/3		
Nancy Caldwell	7/3		
Suzanne Wyrick	7/6		
Susan Golian	7/8		
Dan Griset	7/8		
Jennifer Gough	7/10		
Kasey Kipp	7/10		
Pat Markle	7/11		
Ted Gregory	7/13		
Dina Bahr	7/14		
Bette Hoover	7/16		
Willem De Veirman	7/17	Luke Ronaldson	8/9
Ed Foster	7/17	Tom Grabiell	8/10
Linda Calkins	7/20	Bruce Hird	8/12
Janet DiChiro	7/20	Sarah Woods	8/13
Diane Hanlon	7/20	Kurt Barkemeyer	8/14
Jamie Kausen	7/21	Hugh Davis	8/16
Locke Darmer	7/23	Max Carr	8/19
Kathleen Scott	7/24	Kevin Curtis	8/19
Shane McCartney	7/27	Barbara Sawyer	8/19
Matt Fisher	7/28	Mildred Nilsson	8/23
Rachel Miner	7/29	Angela Cortright	8/25
Rick Woods	7/29	Ava Johnson	8/25
Barbara Bandy	7/31	Phil Ramming	8/26
Grace Goulding	7/31	Joan Smith	8/26
Ian Hogan	7/31	Susan Bubb	8/28
Helen Foster	8/5	Paul Curtis	8/29
Kristin Goulding	8/5	Myrona DeLaney	8/29
Heather Hall	8/5		
Karen Jacoby	8/7		
Jack Wetherholt	8/7		
Megan Demeter	8/8		
Alexandria Chandler	8/9		

I am grateful for Community Church, Congregational commitment to the pastors in allowing us, encouraging us, to take time for study leave each year. It is always refreshing and I come back remembering what it is we, as a church, have to offer.

The first class was on David. What I loved about our study was we allowed the stories to be very earthy and very human. Peter Hawkins convinced us to leave behind all Victorian notions. I sometimes think we, Christians, in our attempt to be good and holy and right, deny our earthy humanity. We try to be like the angels, but we are jealous, we have angrily denied love's change, and we have mourned.

To deny these things is to deny God access to our heart.

To open up these places is to allow God in. You, in this church, have shared deeply in all of the stuff of life. No pretensions. It is part of what makes you both human and holy.

The second class was on Global Song emphasizing congregational singing. When we sing songs from around the world we enact the future we desire where we are all brothers and sisters, living, loving, and praising God together as one people. World Communion Sunday is October 3 and will be a good time for us to sing a new song.

I took this class in the afternoon with World Communion Sunday in mind but the unexpected result is I came back thinking about our congregation's singing and liturgy. Patrick Evans, the musician who leads the daily chapels at YDS, and works at Broadway Presbyterian Church on Sundays, was a wealth of knowledge, resources, and ideas. There is much for us to explore together.

But for today, for Summer and Fall, know this... 1 out of 4 people do not feel confident in their singing. If you are one of these, as I am, you feel out of place, out of tune, and unable to sing songs well unless you are 4 feet away from someone who can confidently sing. You respond either by singing very softly or not at all. The Holy Spirit is lost in self consciousness.

I'd like to suggest a different strategy. Let's sit together, in the front half or three quarters of the church, so that the confident singers can help us all out. Further, it helps our worshipping community tremendously when the Opening Hymn is inspired. Given the 4 foot rule, if there are only a few in our sanctuary when the song begins, it means we have a few confident singers and many who are afraid to open their mouths. Probably some of you have even decided it would be better to come after the opening hymn.

Let it not be so! First impressions matter, yes to our guests, but also to your soul. If the first act of worship is divine, you're not likely to ever miss it, for it will enter into your memory, your core, and your life. The theology of the music we sing is the theology we call forth in times of trouble, which is why Rodger takes such care to choose well. Long after a great sermon has been forgotten, you will still be singing.

Love to you all,

Heather

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sundays

9:00 a.m. Faith Journey
presentations August 1st and 8th

10:00 a.m. A traditional Service
with full choir, fellowship and
Children's Sunday School.



Thanks Bill for sharing your story!

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Newport Beach, CA
PERMIT #805



COMMUNITY CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL