

Sermon
15 Pentecost-18-B-2
St. Andrew's, Methuen
September 5, 2021
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Isaiah 35:4-7a

Psalm 146

James 2:1-10, [11-13], 14-17

Mark 7:24-37

Where is God for you this morning?

As I often say, most of our images of God put God out there somewhere.

Like "Our Father, who art in heaven..."

Then sometimes our spiritual intuition senses that God is inside us, as when Paul says, "**I no longer live but Christ lives in me...**"—not as a stranger but as our deepest Self.

Mark says today that before healing the deaf man, "**Jesus, looked up**": Is Jesus looking up to heaven at an old man on a throne far, far, away? Or is Jesus looking up into the immensity of Being and locating himself inside the Great Mystery that is God?

Is Jesus connecting with the reality that he is inside God, is he once again pointing us to the fact that we are all inside the Great Mystery he calls the Realm of God—like Jonah inside the belly of the whale?

This is not what I used to think. In college I had one of those posters on my wall with a photograph of the Milky Way spread out in all its glory. In the bottom right there is a white arrow pointing to a tiny speck and next to the arrow are the words: "**you are here.**"

You are here: on a tiny planet in a medium size galaxy, just one among billions of galaxies.

This can have the effect of unnerving us with how microscopic we are. What could possibly matter in this life if we are an insignificant speck of dust in a vast universe. This view can turn our lives into meaningless moments in an ocean of meaninglessness.

But when we are able to share Jesus's vision that we are inside the Realm of God, we know we are part of something unbelievably immense and

grand. **We may be the lowliest servants, but we are living in the grandest house.**

But—and here’s the thing, it is even more important to wake up to WHO GOD IS—TO GOD’S CHARACTER, GOD’S HEART.

Certainly, when Jesus is outside Israel, he is still inside the Realm of God, but it takes the desperate mother to remind Jesus and the 12 that while she may be outside the covenant of Israel, **she is inside the compassion and care of God.**

Don’t tell her God doesn’t love her sick daughter as much as she does!

Later Jesus takes aside the man who can’t hear or speak and looks up to the Cosmic Lover who surrounds us and brings that same healing Love to the man, who does not know God is Cosmic Lover.

In fact, in his day, there are those who teach that it is God who makes us sick.

Therefore, Jesus’ healing is not simply to fix the man’s ears, but to help the man locate himself inside the Love and Care of God.

Jesus sighs and says, “Be opened.”

Be opened to the healing love of God that surrounds you on every side and walk in the awareness that God adores you and wants you to be whole.

It is good to know we live inside the realm of God. But it is crucial to know the character of that God in whose reality we live.

And what is God’s character? Jesus, especially Jesus on the cross, is God’s character in the flesh.

I ran across a book first published in 1911, written by Charles Eastman, who earned a BS from Dartmouth College and his medical degree from Boston University. He was also a mixed-blood Sioux.

In his book The Soul of the Indian, Eastman writes about his experience of Native spirituality.

In comparison to the simplicity of spirit of the natives Eastman saw the European Christian as someone who **“spoke much of spiritual things, while seeking only the material. [Christians] bought and sold everything: time, labor, personal independence, the love of woman, and even the ministrations of their holy faith!** The lust for money, power, and conquest so characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race did not escape [Native American] moral condemnation...**nor did he fail to contrast**

this conspicuous trait of the dominant race with the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus.” 22

For example, when the English came to Massachusetts, they took the land of the natives, because in English law a person does not own property until he builds a wall or fence around it. Of course, it never occurred to the native inhabitants that the land—Mother Earth--could be owned so they never built fences or walls—and thus had the land taken from them.

By contrast Eastman says on his first religious retreat a teenager takes off into the wilderness, “Wishing to appear before [the Great Mystery] in all humility, he wore no clothing save his moccasins and breech-cloth. At the solemn hour of sunrise or sunset he took up his position, overlooking the glories of earth and facing the “Great Mystery”, and there he remained, naked, erect, silent, and motionless, exposed to the elements and forces..., for a night and a day to two day and nights, but rarely longer.” Page 8

Could it be that we live in a prison constructed by the idea that God is not LOVE and therefore life is a problem to be solved instead of a mystery to be lived?

Have we bought into the idea that we must control all things instead of love all things?

Is that why we make distinctions between rich and poor that James writes about to his church?

 Alan Watts wrote, “to ‘have’ running water you must let go of it and let it run. The same is true of life and of God.” *Wisdom of Insecurity*, page 24

Three questions: **Where** is God for you this morning?

Who is God for you this morning?

And if we answer God is the Great Mystery of Love in whom we live and move and have our being, then the third question is:

Who will you, who will I, who will we, be for this God?