

How do you see God? – John Marshall - 2012

How do you see God? How does He move in your life? If I were to get answers from each and every one of you, I suspect that I will get varying answers. The way I see it is that God is the Creator and principle of all there is. God is not the Sun but He lies in the Sun. God is not the Moon nor the Earth nor the Stars but He is the principle of them and lies within them. I do not believe that I nor any other person is God but He lies within us as each of our principle. So to find Him, we have to dig deep. We have to, as it says in 1 Thessalonians 5 “Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.” I submit that if we do examine everything and everyone deeply and carefully, we will see God in that examination.

Paul said in our second reading today, 1 Corinthians 8, that “Knowledge puffs up, but Love builds up.” I don’t know about you, but I have been particularly troubled and irritated by many people who consider themselves to be “RELIGIOUS” these days. You know who I am talking about. You know, those people who profess that they “follow the Word” and beat people over the head with how they come to perceive words in the bible and how they see God. They would take our first lesson today in Deuteronomy 8 and say that if a person does not believe in God as they do, then they are apostates and non believers in our Lord. They cut up and divide children of God into camps of us versus them. This is what religion does to some people and it is why there have been many evils perpetrated among God’s creation in the name of what “they” perceive as God. People often think of the historical Inquisitions when they think of things like this but the Inquisition still happens on a daily basis, by the very same people who call themselves to be religious people. It is no wonder, given all the past and current atrocities performed by religious people, that Atheists exist. When we are in religious mode we drive people away from God by our very behavior. We claim knowledge of the Bible and we become the puffed up folk that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians.

We just do not dig deep enough when asking the question “Who is God to me and what does He look like?” When we read or listen to passages in the Bible, we often do not examine the words in them deep enough. We see words and use them as weapons against those who do not think as we do and do not dig deeper and find the LOVE in those words to build up. Did you know that people in the faith of Islam see Deuteronomy 18 as a prediction of the coming of Muhammad? We Christians see it as the prediction of the coming of Jesus Christ. Some say it is a prediction of the coming of the prophet Isaiah. The point that I am making is that many good people interpret the words in the Bible in many different ways. Isn’t it arrogance to think our interpretations should be held by all people? Isn’t it God who guides? Isn’t this the arrogance of our perceived knowledge? When we try to make others see things in the exact same way as we do, we do get puffed up. At the same time, we tear others down. This is not love. To me, this is not of God. Frankly, a God that would condone the tearing down of anyone because of their belief or even their behavior is a God with whom I have not made the acquaintance, nor do I wish to. I, personally, am acquainted with a loving and caring and guiding God that guides and loves and cares for all of His children. The God that I am acquainted with tears down no one but builds them up. The God that I am acquainted with can see His presence in everything and everyone. Including people of different faiths and those who do not believe in God in the first

place.

This is why we should dig deep to find Him in all of our experiences. I for one do not see the pursuit of science and faith to be mutually exclusive. To me, learning about our world and our universe fits very well with our pursuit of knowing and experiencing God. Wonder is a wonderful thing. Just because we can not see some things, and we will never be able to see everything, I do not think, doesn't mean that we should abandon our capacity for wonder. I feel, oftentimes, some scientist do this in their dogmatic adherence to the scientific method. I also feel, oftentimes, that many religious folk lose their capacity for wonder as well when they cling ever so tightly on the letter of words and their purported knowledge of the Bible. How can you wonder if you think that you know everything? Wonder is crucial to the heart and soul. Without it, we had might as well be dead. How can you have hope without wonder? How can you love without wonder? How can one live in this life and not see miracles? It truly strikes me that one of our parishioners, a six year old little girl, is named Miracle. What a fantastic name for someone to have. Some people may try to tease her because of it, but I get the sense that somehow, if she feels love, she will come to love and appreciate herself very much and that is always to precursor to loving others and ultimately appreciating God. I am hopeful that Miracle comes to truly appreciate her name because, with it, carries awe and wonder and I suspect that she will grow into an awesome and wonderful young lady. We should never forget that there are miracles of creation all around us. Isn't it a miracle that you breathe and are able to open and shut your eyes and have a heart that beats? Sure these things can somewhat be explained in the physical sciences, but those explanations can only go so far. We can get to 4 of the five W's and the one H, but we can only ever get so far as to the WHY. The Why, in order for it to be completely and fully explained, must be constantly sought? I think the ultimate answer to our why's lie in the principle, the place where everything starts. To me, that principle is God. That which nothing would be without. If one were to examine things deeply, I think one would have to come to this conclusion.

This is the problem I have with religious people today. I see many people who profess themselves to be religious to be the Pharisees of today. Wasn't one of Jesus' lessons was to not be like them? They held onto their knowledge of proper Godly behavior tightly and were very puffed up and seemed to relish tearing other people down. In people like this, love is void. Isn't unrestricted love the thing that the following God is supposed to be about? Isn't unrestricted and never ending Love the very essence of God? We can never think ourselves to be in the position of judging anyone. Yet, judge we religious people do. This is what makes holding too tightly to religion a shallow way of worshiping God. Father Narain got me thinking about shallow movements this week. It occurred to me when he brought this up that shallow movements are those that do not require deep examination of self and soul nor deep examination of beliefs, to cast off the spurious or false, and embrace those that are at their core steeped in love and respect of all of God's Children. It is sad to say and acknowledge, but Religion and mindless attachment to it is a movement that is shallow. A Religion that would be able to call itself a deep movement would be one that questions itself and allow others to question it to dig for a deeper meaning and understanding of God. To me, that is the only way for religion to be a useful tool for us in our practice to worship, appreciate, and follow God.

Otherwise, it is only a tool for arrogantly puffing ourselves up at the expense of others. Religion is not Godly but becomes Godless when it does not question and examine itself deeply and is not being about loving all of God's creation. We end up just worshiping and honoring our selfish self-centered selves if we do not look into everything and everyone deeply.

I suspect that you are not a Spiritual lightweight. I trust that you do not have a shallow Soul. I would hope that you would consider yourself as having a deep and powerful relationship with our Lord. I would hope that you do not mindlessly offer up prayers or words to God nor shallowly read the words in our Book of Common Prayer or the bible. You do question and dig deep, don't you? Most of all, I hope you have a large capacity for wonder and awe and appreciate the miracles around you. I believe that we are all on this earth to seek out God in all of His creation and develop a deeper and closer relationship to Him. It is a never ending quest that is at the same time a joyous loving quest. Our neverending search for the "WHY" is the neverending attempt to be as close to the heart of God as we possibly can. Yet we must remember that all of our paths are different and we all see things from our differing vantage points. We should respect the way others look upon God, as God created everybody and we are all His children. We should never be haughty or puffed up. And LOVE should be at the core of everything we do and strive to think. We can not tear down in order to get to God. We must build. Construction is the Way. Destruction never is. Shallowness almost never stands. Dig deep so that you may be able to build your way in a solidified way. I suspect that is the only way in which you are going to clearly see God.