

## RECOGNIZING CHRIST

5/17/20 ~ St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Encinitas, CA (*Livestreamed*)  
Easter 6 (A): Psalm 66:7-18; Acts 17:22-31; John 14:15-21

Remember the days when we used to take trips? This week I was thinking about the time I travelled to the U.S. on a school break from my time in Honduras. Walking through the Houston airport on a layover, I spotted a Seattle friend and his family. I hadn't seen anyone I knew from my "regular" life in four months, so even though I'd never met his family before, I hugged every one of them as if I was being reunited with all of my best friends! I felt completely giddy. The sense of recognizing someone I knew was absolutely wonderful!

That memory came to mind as I started exploring the message in this week's readings that we have a God who can be intimately known. Last week's message was about reveling in the fact that God knows all of us—calling us each by name as a Good Shepherd would.

Now, this morning, we're reminded that, not only does God know us, but we are able to know God. Jesus says it this way: "Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." He's initiating the disciples to the idea that God will be known to us—as the Risen Christ is revealed in others, we'll recognize God among us.

I'm sure you can all relate to my travel story, and that feeling of running into somebody you know in a place you didn't expect to recognize anyone. In another city, on a beach in Hawaii...maybe touring a castle in Europe—at first someone's gesture, body-build or hair color catches your eye, and you think, "Wow! That sort of looks like So&so," and even though you don't think it's possible for your friend to be there, you watch more closely, and, then, finally realize, "That IS So&So!" What an amazing feeling to recognize someone in a place where you weren't even looking for them!

This morning's reading from John is a continuation of last Sunday's passage. Jesus and the disciples are in the Upper Room; they've enjoyed what will become known as the Last Supper; he's washed their feet and explained that they are no longer students, but friends; and, now, he continues to explain that though he is leaving, he will still be with them.

Jesus points out that rather than orphaning them, God will accompany them in a new way through the companionship of the "Spirit of Truth." And he says, "You [will] know ~~him~~[Christ], because ~~he~~[God] lives with you and will be with you.

I just started reading a newer book that explores this idea of Christ being with and among us called, The Universal Christ. It's written by Richard Rohr, a Franciscan Priest and well-respected theologian, who suggests that if we only think about Jesus of Nazareth, who was here on earth, but now is gone, and God as the creator somewhere up there in the sky, then we completely miss the point of the Divine being among us in the form of Christ. To use Jesus' words: "Christ is in you, and you are in Christ."

The book opens with an excerpt from the writing of Caryll Houselander, who was a mystic. Her story is about the multiple-day experience she had of literally being able to see the face of Christ on everyone she met. She wrote about how real this idea became for her, that God is among us, and that she, then, understood at a deeper level that how she treated the people in front of her was also how she was treating Christ. She understood on a whole

new level that loving one's neighbor was dependent on being known by God and being able to recognize God in others.

We also hear about the knowable God in our reading from Acts. As the Apostle Paul addresses the Athenians, he praises them for their faithfulness to their religious beliefs. But then, pointing out their altar honoring an "unknown God," Paul evangelizes them—that is he shares the Good News with them—by conveying the idea that the Athenians could also benefit from the Christian path, because we have a God who can be known. Instead of an "unknown God," our God is one we can recognize.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus also reiterates that one of the ways we come to recognize Christ among us, is through right living. He says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Jesus doesn't say this to put the fear of God into people's hearts, or to ensure they avoid punishment for their wrong-doings, rather he's insinuating that the commandments are all about how to have a better life, by treating people well, by having a clear conscience, and by placing God at the center of living.

This week, as you consider ways that you can know God and ways you might recognize the Risen Christ in others, and, therefore, treat them the way you would Christ, I'll leave you with a blessing that was in the d365 Daily Devotion app this week:

Go and chase the love that has called you.  
Go and seek the truth that has found you.  
Go and rest in the peace that grounds you.  
Recognizing God is with you wherever you go.

-AMEN

## **Readings** (*Common English Bible Translation*)

### **Psalm 66:7-18**

God rules with power forever;  
keeps a good eye on the nations.  
So don't let the rebellious exalt themselves.

All you nations, bless our God!  
Let the sound of his praise be heard!  
God preserved us among the living;  
he didn't let our feet slip a bit.

But you, God, have tested us—  
you've refined us like silver,  
trapped us in a net,  
laid burdens on our backs,  
let other people run right over our heads—  
we've been through fire and water.

But you brought us out to freedom!  
So I'll enter your house  
with entirely burned offerings.  
I'll keep the promises I made to you,

the ones my lips uttered,  
the ones my mouth spoke when I was in deep trouble.  
I will offer the best burned offerings to you  
along with the smoke of sacrificed rams.  
I will offer both bulls and goats.

Come close and listen,  
all you who honor God;  
I will tell you what God has done for me:  
My mouth cried out to him  
with praise on my tongue.  
If I had cherished evil in my heart,  
my Lord would not have listened.

### **Acts 17:22-31**

Paul stood up in the middle of the council on Mars Hill and said, “People of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way. As I was walking through town and carefully observing your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To an unknown God.’ What you worship as unknown, I now proclaim to you. God, who made the world and everything in it, is Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn’t live in temples made with human hands. Nor is God served by human hands, as though he needed something, since he is the one who gives life, breath, and everything else. From one person God created every human nation to live on the whole earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands. God made the nations so they would seek him, perhaps even reach out to him and find him. In fact, God isn’t far away from any of us. In God we live, move, and exist. As some of your own poets said, ‘We are his offspring.’

“Therefore, as God’s offspring, we have no need to imagine that the divine being is like a gold, silver, or stone image made by human skill and thought. God overlooks ignorance of these things in times past, but now directs everyone everywhere to change their hearts and lives. This is because God has set a day when he intends to judge the world justly by a man he has appointed. God has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

### **John 14:15-21**

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. I will ask the Father, and he will send another Companion, who will be with you forever. This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can’t receive because it neither sees him nor recognizes him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be with you.

“I won’t leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”