

REFLECTING WITHOUT WORDS

5/9/21 ~ St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Encinitas, CA

Easter 6 (B): ~~Acts 10:44-48~~; Psalm 98; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17

Come, Holy Spirit. Take our lips, and speak through them; take our minds and think with them; take our hearts and set them on fire, in the name of the Holy Trinity. Amen.

You may remember how the Gospel of John begins: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." I mention this because, because we've spent the past three weeks having John's Jesus remind us about loving each other, and abiding in God, in multiple ways.

On one hand, I love the poetic language of this Gospel, and the idea that God is Word itself. On the other hand, sometimes John just uses so many words! But this book of scripture isn't the only place with too many words, in my opinion! We're surrounded by words: in what we read, in what we write, in what we hear, and in what we speak.

A few weeks ago, a facilitator in an online conference suggested we turn off the words for a few minutes and simply let an image form in our mind. It was challenging, but I found such relief in forming a visual in my mind's eye, instead of rolling around in more words!

So, today, rather than a traditional homily, I want to create space for us to experience God's presence in a different way. I'll provide a very brief reflection on each of our readings, and then, in between each of them, invite you to focus on an image.

Let's start with First John. What stands out for me in this passage, today, is this line: "The one who came by water and blood, [is] Jesus Christ; not with ~~the~~ water only but with ~~the~~ water and ~~the~~ blood." This Johannine community is being reminded that Jesus was not just Divine, but also fully human.

So, on this day—as we celebrate mothers, and those who have mothered us—it's important to remember that Jesus also went through the birth process. In these next few moments of silence, I invite you to let words slip away and simply allow an image of Jesus, as a historical person with flesh and bones—just like us—come to mind.

Don't judge the image or try to change it; just trust that the Holy Spirit is at work...

[2-3 MINUTES OF SILENCE/REFLECTION]

Okay...what stands out in our passage, from the Gospel of John, is how Jesus makes clear we are chosen by God. To me, that's really powerful—to think about it's not that we signed up to receive God, so God's obligated to fulfill our contract, but that God chose each and every one of us to be God's uniquely beloved...to abide in us.

So, in these next moments of silence, allow an image to come to mind that reflects being chosen by God...

[2-3 MINUTES OF SILENCE/REFLECTION]

And finally, we have the beautiful imagery of the Psalm, where creation itself is alive with God's presence: the sea makes a joyful noise, the rivers clap, and the hills ring out. In these next moments of silence, allow an image to form celebrating God in creation...or you might want to simply contemplate the image on the cover of your bulletin...

[2-3 MINUTES OF SILENCE/REFLECTION]

Okay...hopefully, those images made you feel more aware of God's presence, or maybe they sparked your curiosity about where God is calling you, or, at the very least, gave you a break—if ever so briefly—from words. And, now, we give thanks to our Mother/Father God—our creator—and for all that is.

—Amen

Collect of the Day:

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Acts 10:44-48

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Psalm 98

Sing to the LORD a new song, *
for he has done marvelous things.

With his right hand and his holy arm *
has he won for himself the victory.

The LORD has made known his victory; *
his righteousness has he openly shown in the sight of the nations.

He remembers his mercy and faithfulness to
the house of Israel, *
and all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

Shout with joy to the LORD, all you lands; *
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.

Sing to the LORD with the harp, *
with the harp and the voice of song.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn *
shout with joy before the King, the LORD.

Let the sea make a noise and all that is in it, *
the lands and those who dwell therein.

Let the rivers clap their hands, *
and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD,
when he comes to judge the earth.

In righteousness shall he judge the world *
and the peoples with equity.

1 John 5:1-6

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

John 15:9-17

Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."