

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church

The Fifth Sunday of Epiphany: February 4, 2024

God's Essence

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to the fifth Sunday of Epiphany. We had an amazing concert yesterday! Thank-you to all who helped make it happen and to all who attended. I have to tell you how proud I am to be part of a church that states it is inclusive, then actually is. Not too long ago we read this Gospel of Jesus doing healing during Advent and last week we discussed Jesus having power over nature and spirit. Today, I would like to explore our reading from Isaiah because it gets to the bottom, or should I say the creation, of it all.

For those at the times of these scriptures (just as today) we wonder: the what, where and how of God. We think does God even care if I'm afraid or confused about his will for me? Does God even see that my life sometimes feels like one long walk on a treadmill to nowhere? Doesn't God see the injustice that sometimes seems to flourish in our world, our communities and sometimes right in our own lives?

Of course, many of those who proclaim and hear Isaiah 40 learned about God's incomparable love for us a long time ago. But in case our memory has shrunk, the prophet reminds us that nothing but God's own nature limits the Lord. So, time and space don't limit God. God doesn't live in the church building. Nor does God's energy or endurance limit God. God

doesn't get tired like people do. Even taking care of a rebellious world doesn't somehow wear God out.

In fact, finally, the prophet insists, God is cognitively unlimited. In other words, God's wisdom and understanding is complete. God both knows about and sees everything. So, our mighty God is able to help tired, weary and weak people like the Israelites, like Jesus healing those around him, and of course you and me.

But will this perfectly wise God help people like you and me? In other words, does the God who is able to help grasshoppers, also actually want to help us? Isaiah insists God, in fact, loves to give power to people who sometimes lack it.

Through Isaiah 40, God reminds us that those who rely on the Lord find that help. God doesn't always take away our problems, yet God gives us the strength to deal with them. God helps vulnerable people like us so that we can run and not tire out. God lends us a hand so that we can walk and "not run out of gas."

In 2006 after a four-year battle with cancer, Anita Moorjani died in a hospital. She is one of the most famous and medically recorded miracles of our day. She experienced a near-death experience and is now famous for speaking on the topic of life and death. She is, for all necessity, a modern-day prophet. She confirms the magnificence of God and also our ability to feel that relationship.

Anita, like most of us, had spent her life trying to be a good daughter, mother, and friend to those around her. She cared for those in her life endlessly without ever paying attention to herself and her own wants and needs. She had been born a Hindu, raised a Christian, and was never really at home in any faith tradition. But nevertheless, God has and is using her to continue the message of Isaiah and confirm what Jesus has been sharing with the disciples and the church since his time on earth.

Anita describes her near-death experience, which is abbreviated as NDE:

“In my NDE state, I realized that the entire universe is composed of unconditional love, and I’m an expression of this. Every atom, molecule, quark, and tetraquark, is made of love. I can be nothing else, because this is my essence and the nature of the entire universe. Even things that seem negative are all part of the infinite, unconditional spectrum of love.

In fact, Universal life-force energy or God is love, and I’m composed of Universal energy! Realizing this made me understand that I didn’t have to try to become someone else in order to be worthy. I already am all that I could attempt to be. Similarly, when we know that we are love, we don’t need to work at being loving toward others. Instead, we just have to be true to ourselves, and we become instruments of loving energy, which touches everyone we come into contact with.”

Anita awoke from her state of death to soon be cured of all disease and cancer within days. For those of us who struggle for tangible miracles this is one for our generation. As scripture reminds us, we cannot hide from God, and there is a plan even if we cannot see it at this very moment. Anita

reminds us all that eventually we will understand, eventually we will, in the words of the apostle Paul, know and be known fully.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning. He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name, because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

Have you not known what the message Jesus was proclaiming to the neighboring towns was? Jesus was after all proclaiming the Gospel, the good news - way before his crucifixion and resurrection. He was proclaiming the everlasting God – the unconditional love of the creator, the idea that we are composed of God's life force and when we act like we are not made of this, it is we, the human being, that suffers the consequence. For even the demons, in the face of Jesus, in the face of love – cannot stay.

Now we know that everyone in the physical world was not physically healed by Jesus. We also know that sometimes we feel like our prayers for healing go up into the air with no results. But Isaiah tells us that those who wait on the Lord will have renewed strength. And Anita explains that everyone is healed, whether here on earth, or when we see God, feel God, and finally melt into the unconditional love of the creator. Amen