

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA
The Second Sunday after Epiphany: January 16, 2022

Seeing Jesus as God

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and thank you for joining us. I know we are taking so many extra precautions these days, but please know that it is out of love that we are again worshiping from home. Also know that as we do celebrate communion digitally, wherever you are on your journey you are being filled today with the Holy Word, so for today, I present an allegory to feast on.

I have often heard there are two kinds of Christians, the ones who are tied to the Bible, and those who try to identify with Jesus. Those who look to the Bible, I find amazing as their faith grapples daily with the God of the Old Testament. But I sometimes wonder if, in the midst of memorizing a scripture of words and moral codes, they miss the humanity of Jesus in their midst.

And there are those of us, including myself, who use scripture to live a life identifying with Jesus; using his life, words, and morality as a guide. This is also an incomplete look at the wonder of God in our midst, if focused solely on Jesus the man, or human life choice alone. Today we are reminded of the missing piece, what Epiphany is all about: Jesus as God.

In light of the world's present situation with crisis after crisis, our own personal losses, and grief in a never-ending world of personal and communal sacrifice, what do we do? Well, we pray to the Lord, right? We

pray to the Lord, cross our fingers, hope not to die, and wait for something to change. Right. This is what we do.

So I, probably like you, need to understand what happens or, more importantly, what isn't happening. Why is it so many prayers are prayed? What is it I should expect from God? So while pondering this, I had an Epiphany. I will share.

Jesus as God. That means, if I were casting a play of the New Testament, I could replace Jesus with God or God with Jesus. And if I were to do that I would learn a little bit more about the God who is beyond my understanding. So let's look at God.

In our Gospel reading today (the Feast at Cana), God attends a wedding with one of his creatures, or rather Jesus attends a wedding with his mother Mary. She looks expectantly at Jesus and tells him there is no more wine. In the case of God, a human would pray to God expectantly and explain there is scarcity. In both cases there is an expectancy that God or Jesus (whichever you prefer) will indeed fill the order, grant the request, make scarcity become abundance.

However Jesus is not coerced into quickly solving the problem. In fact he almost gently rebukes his mother: explaining that her timing is off. So as we do our analogy, when we pray to God and ask for immediate answers, he may in fact reply, "the timing is off." In the case of our prayer that means it seems to go unanswered.

But this is not new behavior on our part or on the part of Jesus as God. When Lazarus died Jesus was indeed grieving, and, yes, he did eventually raise him from the dead, but he did not rush. He did not cause a dramatic or magic scene. He took his time and eventually got to Lazarus. As Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Again a request with a delayed answer, but answered still.

So at our wedding, we also see that Jesus does not act alone. In the exchange, that would mean that God does not act alone. Mary tells the servants to listen to him, obey, and do the work. God tells us through many means and ways to listen to him and do the work.

The servants come through providing the water, the base from which Jesus can work. God provides the base for us to answer our prayers, whatever that support model is: church, community, family, friends, information, at just the right time. We work with that base.

When raising Lazarus, Jesus called Lazarus into action. Again, God working not alone, but with us. When does this happen again? Jesus on the mount asked for whatever bread and fish the group had. There is always, when God works within our earthly world, a base. There is also a need for us to trust and work with what God gives us. Neither God or Jesus work alone. They ask us to provide the essential ingredient that needs transformation. And it may be you who needs to be transformed.

That essential ingredient may be your or someone else's heart, financial backing, information, or even concrete materials – like concrete. But if you listen to God, just as the servants listened to Jesus, you will be able to make preparations.

And lastly, of course, Jesus turns the water not only into wine, but into the finest wine; in an amount that the word “abundance” can't even cover. Lazarus is eventually raised, and on the mount there is leftover loaves and fishes. It may be a matter of timing, or trusting, but God is in the mix of it.

If we exchange Jesus for God in this situation, God will take our scarcities, our foibles, our sins, and not only turn them into something serviceable, but into abundance, joy and peace beyond whatever our original prayer of need was. Even if that glorious experience happens at the moment of death, it is a given, and it is always in God's timing.

We pray, we ask, we are heard and we have our answers. But beware that things are in God's timing, just as Jesus was at the wedding. Remember God works with us; we share the load. Even if God's presence makes the yoke easier to bear, know that when all is said and done, the right answers come, the timing is perfect, and we can only stand in awe of how we came through it all.

Please study your scripture, but don't lose Jesus. Study the life of Jesus, but don't lose the overarching story of God, and you too may enjoy an Epiphany. Amen