

TO SEE THE FACE OF GOD...

There is a story about a 4 year-old boy who goes into his newborn baby sister's room, finds her awake in her crib, and as the mother watches and listens from the doorway she overhears: "Hey Chrissy. Maybe when you're a little older you can describe to me what God looks like. You just got to see God, but as I'm growing up, I'm having trouble remembering."

We want to see God. Its in our nature. The one who created us and all that we see, wed like to SEE Him too. Moses was no different. Here he's spent day and night with Almighty God on the mountain, leading his people through deserts and rivers, he'd just like to put a face with the words of life that he has been instructed with, sent as a messenger with. He'd like to tell His people that he has SEEN the Lord, the Almighty God, and perhaps that will stop them from questioning him. He wants to SEE the authority that he and his people, are following.

Like the authorities in the temple who want to see God as easily as they can see the authority that is on their denarius -- like us who put our historical authority figures on our money. Ours is little different in this country, whereas for example in England they continue to put the reigning monarch on the pound notes and coins for instance, we don't put our current leaders on our currency. George Washington fought the idea of being put on the face of the \$1 bill, but agreed only after he had served as president and thus our tradition of putting past leaders on our money came to pass. But our money also has put God on our money, In God we trust.

No one has ever seen the Almighty God, so we cant put the Almighty's image down on paper, or printed on the currency, or even draw it in the computer. With all the power unleashed on the computers and phones developed by Mr. Jobs that we've heard so much in the news the past few weeks at his passing, to use the vernacular of the day: They haven't developed an app for that yet.

No one has ever seen God. But as Christians we do believe that God came down to earth and put a face on his Almighty power when he sent his Son, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus our Christ, to be the human face of the trinity. But once again mankind didn't have the technology developed to take a picture of Jesus, so later generations have painted pictures and we draw what Jesus looked like in our own minds, but we have never really seen what God looked like in Jesus either. And the Holy Spirit cannot be seen but is represented in Scripture as wind, water and flame...but that's not an entirely accurate portrait but simply images.

So how do we see God?

God told Moses that he would not see his face, but that when he turned around after God had passed, he would see his back. There's some wisdom in this simple action as well. Because if and when we follow God, we would see God's back. But when we're trying to lead God, we'd turn around and attempt to see God's face.

We are called to follow the One with the ultimate authority. We are not called to lead and harness that authority for our own uses, our own needs. How many prayers and actions are offered to God asking for his power to be lead the way we think things ought to go? Again, if we

follow God, we follow in faith and sense his presence and see his back. If we try to lead God, were attempting to see Gods face.

God does give Moses, and us, a gift though in the description of how we are to be as we follow Him. "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.

God gives to Moses and all of us, a comfort in His presence.
We can rest in a cleft of the rock.
We are guarded by His hand.
And we can look out and follow Him.

The Lord says, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest...you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name....I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

It is true. God leads his people to the Promised Land. He is gracious and merciful to them in the 40 years wandering in the desert. And Moses, the physical man, dies before seeing the Promised Land.

However, as New Testament Christians, we know that eternal life is found in Jesus. And the Moses of the mountain and of the desert is seen later in our history and when he comes to life again in the account of our Lords Transfiguration -- once again on top of a mountain -- Moses and Elijah are witness to Jesus being shown to have the authority of God, as Gods son. And in the retelling of the transfiguration, Moses finally gets to see God in all of his glory. It is not told in our accounts of our Lords transfiguration that he sees the face of God -- but Moses asked to see his glory. And hundreds of years later, in a cloud of witnesses, God answers Moses plea and grants him his request.

God tells Moses to follow him.
He will look for God and God will be there, though we cannot see His face.
He will follow God, and God will protect him.
He will seek God, and God will be found transfigured through Jesus for us.

God tells us, through Jesus, to follow Him. Jesus tells gives us the Great Commandment in next weeks Gospel: to love one another with all of our heart, mind and soul. My favorite Broadway, show bar none, is Les Miserables; and in it, there is memorable lyric, To love another person is to see the face of God.

Like Moses, through Jesus...
We are called to look for God in the love that we share with one another...and God will there.
We are called to follow God in the love that we put into everything we do...and God will be gracious to us, merciful to us, guide and protect us.
We are called to seek God in the love reflected to us in this life and the eternal life Jesus gave

us...and God will be found.

In Jesus name we pray --

The Rev. Lisa Rotchford Golden, October 16, 2011
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