

A personal relationship with a personal God – 17/04/2016

“Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.⁷ If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

⁸ Philip *said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”⁹ Jesus *said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? (John 14:6-9)

Beloved in the Lord,

For many people, God is an impersonal being, a higher power or energy. People try to explain this power, tap into it, use it for their purposes. For others God is a distant being who created the world, and now sits far away and lets it run its course. For others, God is a being that needs to be appeased through sacrifice or ritual. Certain things have to be done in order to receive a favourable outcome. Lately, we have had a run of funerals and listening to what people say in their farewells, many Latvian’s quote folk songs and Dainas which depict God in a diminutive sense, and treat Him like an old Grandfather or Uncle –“dieviņš”.

So what is God really like? Jesus gives us a very clear answer:

“He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn.14:9)

Jesus Christ reveals the Father to us. He reveals God as a personal God, who desires to have a personal and intimate relationship with us. God created us to live in fellowship with Him, to live in His presence. In the beginning it was so. Adam and Eve enjoyed a very close relationship with God, and we read that in the evenings God would walk in the Garden of Eden and talk with Adam. As we know sin destroyed the relationship. The fellowship was broken when Adam lost sight of God and His Word.

It is interesting and important to note that all throughout the Holy Bible, God uses marriage as an illustration of His relationship with His people. Israel’s disobedience to God, and their unfaithfulness to God’s Word was seen and described by God as adultery. Adultery is the breaking of a covenant, it is breaking a relationship based on trust. God ordained marriage as the highest form of fellowship between a man and woman, and it is beautiful and blessed if it is in line with God’s Word. The New Testament calls the Church of Jesus Christ His bride.

This depicts a close personal relationship. God wants so much more from us than just religious activity. He wants our heart. It is possible to know a lot about God, to do much for Him, and yet not know Him personally. There is a major difference between knowing about God and knowing Him.

Jesus taught very clearly:

“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”
(Mt.7:22-23)

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Jesus is clearly warning us, that doing not enough. You can do a lot for God, and yet not know Him. This sort of activity has no lasting good. Paul says the same thing in his famous passage on love:

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.” (1.Cor.13:1-3)

The word love here is the highest form of love – “Agape” – that is God’s love. A person who does not have a personal relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ does not have and cannot have “agape love”. A person who has not been born again in the blood of Jesus Christ cannot love as Paul describes. This is love that comes from God – it is God loving through us.

In order to truly love, we must first receive God’s gift of love. We need to do that personally. We all need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We need a personal relationship with a personal God.

That is precisely why Jesus came into this world. Sin separates man from God, but Jesus sacrifice of Himself on the cross, His blood shed at Calvary, reunites us with God, because by His blood we are washed clean from sin and reconciled to the Father. When we believe in Jesus, when we open the door of our heart to Him, when we confess our sin and repent of it, and we confess our faith in Him, then we come into a new and right relationship with God.

Jesus comes and lives in our heart by His Holy Spirit. When He lives in our heart then He reveals the Father to us. The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus to us, and Jesus reveals the Father. So what does He reveal? He reveals indescribable love, for God is love. John writes:
“God is love.” (1.John 4:8b).

Let’s see these words in context to get the full picture:

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.” (1.John 4:7-12)

John emphasises that love is from God, and love is the sign that God abides in us and we in Him. People who are practitioners of religion, but who do not have a personal relationship with God, are often unloving. That explains why so much evil happens in Jesus name. True Christian faith exudes love. Jesus said to His disciples:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Jn 13:34-35

This love exists only where a person has a personal relationship with a personal God through Jesus Christ.

Legends say that in his very old age John, also known as the Apostle of love, had just one message that he repeated at every opportunity, “Beloved, love one another.” When asked by one of his disciple’s why he never spoke about anything else, he answered, “because apart from love there is nothing else.”

Love is the foundation. Love is the heart and centre, the core if you like. Paul finishes 1 Cor. 13 with these words:

***“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”
(1.Cor.13:13)***

What is our God like?

Our God is love, and He desires to live in our heart, and to live out His love through us.

Do you have a personal relationship with Him? Does He live in your heart?

Open the door today and you will never be the same.

Amen

***Pastor Colvin MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.
All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.***