

Devotional Blog

Sunday 7th March

A little girl was drawing. Her teacher asked, “What are you drawing?”, she replied “a picture of God”. The teacher remarked “But nobody knows what God looks like”. The little girl responds, “They will in a minute”.

Don't you love that confidence. It must be treasured and nurtured. But as we smile, we are reminded that our image of God can often feel partial at best.

Where do we get our image of God from? Well, we build it up over time both consciously and subconsciously. Key pieces of our faith experience, along with our Biblical knowledge, sketch out a mental canvass. Events in our family, school, church life dynamically build up the picture.

We begin to see God in the world around us, in nature, in music, in dance, in other people's Christian love. We even draw on our own feelings of love for God and others.

As we mature, we revisit our early thinking, we question ideas as we seek deeper meaning. We probe Bible passages that we have long known, prayerfully searching for insight.

Let's take for example one of the most famous passages in the Old Testament that crops up at this point in the Lent season—the Ten Commandments. Many Christians were raised with the idea that the Jewish faith believed that you had to obey the law in order to be 'saved' but Christians preached that you were 'saved' by God's grace and love.

However, if we look at that famous passage about the law (Exodus 20:1-17) God rescues (saves) his people from slavery then he gives

them the law. This pattern of God loving first is repeated throughout the Old Testament:

- I saved you so you now must behave thus...
- I have planted you as a vineyard so now you must bear fruit....
- I freed you from slavery so now you must not have slaves...

And that's how it works for us. God gives first. Amazingly a piece of the divine is shared with us. It's the Holy Spirit at work guiding your understanding of God, building his image for you, in you.

This is not a one-off occurrence. It's a daily happening. Yes! Even in Lockdown! Yes! even when you get things wrong!

The theologian Richard Rohr is famous for saying "you become the god that you worship". If the god you worship is tribal, judgemental, exclusive, then that is how you will become. That's the image you will carry. If the god you worship is friendly, loving, forgiving, inclusive, then that is how you will become. That's the picture you hold.

We carry our own individual picture of God, but we need to think about seeing our picture as one piece of a beautiful mosaic that is created by bringing our church family's mosaic pieces joyously together.

This why testimony is so important. It's piecing that collective mosaic together.

When we work in small fellowship groups, we not only develop our own picture, but we enhance the whole mosaic. This is especially true when we do Bible study together. We not only learn more about God, but we allow the inspiration of the word to give our image of God detail, colour, and depth. It's as if we are in an art class guided by the Holy Spirit.

This collective inspiration is the bedrock of our faith, and our relationship with God. It drives our worship, our prayer, and our Christian outreach.

Constantly God is showering us with his love. It is freely given. We are called to respond each day. It is down to us, like that little girl with her drawing of God, to let everyone know about our Lord as we paint his picture with our lives.

Mark Gilks

Hampton Mission Partnership