

“God’s Personality” A sermon by Lee Ireland
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church
January 15, 2017 Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-9, Acts 10:34-43, Matthew 3:15-17

Prayer: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

Today’s readings from the Bible have a lot to say about the character of God, God’s personality. God is revealed as loving, caring and concerned about all of humanity – rich and poor alike – both sinner and those forgiven. Let’s take a look at the Bible readings for today to see what we can find out about God’s personality.

The Old Testament reading from Isaiah. Right away we see that God delights in his servant. The servant will bring forth justice. Who is the servant? Many Christians interpret Jesus as the servant. Jesus is often described in the Bible as God’s servant. Others use these verses additionally to describe the kind of leadership we should expect from those called by God. And that is all of us. All of us are called by God.

These Isaiah verses reveal that God cares for God’s people. “A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench.” Sounds like a caring, loving God to me. If you’re almost to the breaking point, God will be there to care for you. If your light shines dimly for whatever reason – illness, death of a loved one, disappointment - God isn’t going to blow out your dimly burning wick. God will be there to fan that dimly burning wick back to a strong flame.

We also read in these verses from Isaiah that God created the world. God is a powerful God who created and maintains the world, the universe – everything . We also find out that God has tasks for people to perform - take care of the prisoner, open the eyes that are blind. These verses reveal that God, through us, cares for the poor and disabled, those who don’t have much. I especially like the ending verses that say God is revealing these new things before they happen.

Let’s move on to the reading from Acts. What does Peter have to say about God’s character? Isaiah’s reading says that the Jews were to be a light to the nations. Their God was a God for everyone. Peter carries this thought on to explain that God shows no partiality. God is the God for everyone. God sent Jesus to show us that God’s love is for everyone. Yes, everyone. Prisoner, blind, Jew, Gentile, married, unmarried, divorced, woman, man, rich, poor, disabled, gay, straight. All of those distinctions, those classifications, are definitions that humans created. God doesn’t classify. God loves everyone. Peter says that “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” God’s personality - loving, unbiased, forgiving.

What does the reading from Matthew reveal about God's personality? (Wait for answers.) God's love for humanity is revealed in these verses. God was willing to become a human, just like you and me, in the person of Jesus, so God could reveal God's love for us. Jesus was God. Jesus' life and death revealed that God cared so much for God's creation that he was willing to send Jesus as sacrifice for our sins.

The baptism of Jesus shows us the extent of God's love for us. Jesus didn't need to be baptized. He was sinless. Yet he chose to be baptized to identify with each of us. John the Baptist recognized that Jesus, the son of God, should be the one to baptize him, meaning John. John was the sinner; Jesus was sinless. Yet Jesus insisted that John baptize him "to fulfill all righteousness."

"To fulfill all righteousness" means to align with God's will. Jesus was demonstrating that he was willing to take on the task God assigned to him. He was aligning himself with God's will for his life. Jesus' character and purpose are revealed by his baptism when the heavens open and God speaks confirming Jesus as God's son. "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Do you remember your baptism? I don't. I was baptized as a child. However, as I grew up, I was well schooled in what it meant to be baptized. Being baptized was aligning myself with God's purposes for my life. Being baptized meant that I was set aside, dedicated to God. Being baptized meant that I was joining God's family. My baptism was a sign and symbol that I belonged to God. Being baptized allowed me to understand that God forgives my sin as the Acts reading states, "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through Jesus' name."

God's personality. Loving, forgiving, sacrificing, caring, unbiased, concerned for creation and all humanity.

How has God's personality affected me? As a member of God's family I am reminded that I need to represent the family in the way I live. I need to strive to live as the servant described in Isaiah. I am thankful for God's forgiveness of my sins. It is often hard for me to comprehend and accept, but I know by faith that God loves me – and you.

How has your realization of God's personality affected your life?