

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

HOW DO I KNOW THE MIND OF GOD?

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Excerpt from Today's First Reading and Today's Gospel

He alone stretches out the heavens and treads upon the crests of the sea. He made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south; He does great things past finding out, marvelous things beyond reckoning. Should he come near me, I see him not; should he pass by, I am not aware of him; Should he seize me forcibly, who can say him nay? Who can say to him, "What are you doing?" How much less shall I give him any answer, or choose out arguments against him! Even though I were right, I could not answer him, but should rather beg for what was due me. If I appealed to him and he answered my call, I could not believe that he would hearken to my words.

JOB 9:8-12, 14-16

The disciples approached Jesus and said, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in

the Kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.”

MATTHEW 18:1-5, 10

Reflection

Since the earliest generations of emerging Judeo-Christian traditions, there has been a fervent current of dialogue concerning the relationship between mortal humanity, and the divine nature of God. In many of the cultures in which the peoples found themselves embedded, deities were largely omnipotent, virtually absent from the daily lives of those peoples, and prone to violent and capricious acts against humans, without thought or restriction. The God of the Hebrews and the Christians, to the contrary, was one of benevolent covenant, whose foundational mandate was one of love, for God and for neighbor.

In the narrative of Job, we encounter the paradoxes one discovers in a world where the abundance and blessings of life are greeted as the fruit of God’s love and care for all. Yet this is the same God who abides within a climate of famine, war, impoverishment, and suffering. If God is truly a loving provider/protector, to what source can we attribute what can only be perceived as the evils of our world? Job crashes headlong into this perplexity as he loses every trace of that which he had treasured as God’s abundance in his life. As Jewish and Christian faithful through the centuries have done, Job must learn to surrender his transactional sense of devotion and reward, as if grace were a payment for fidelity. The very reality of God—power, mystery, wondrous creativity, and constancy of presence—always remains beyond our calculus of what is the core of the divine. Job responds, half in wonder, half in confusion: **Should he pass by, I am not aware of him; should he seize me forcibly, who can say him nay? Who can say to him, “What are you doing?” How much less shall I give him any answer, or choose out arguments against him! (9: 11-12, 14).**

After a seemingly endless probing of the realities of who God is, what God does, and why God does it, Job finally comes to the inevitable realization that he must either trust the God of his living faith, or forever live in a torment of doubt and skepticism. When he relinquishes his presumed ‘right’ to know God’s designs or intentions, he is finally free to embrace the heart of his blessed life, a blessing that resides completely in God’s initiative, not in some merely human negotiation. That embrace may seem to demand a superhuman effort of the soul, but it is ultimately the truest ‘reason’ of which mortal knowing is

capable.

Each of us faces the same times of decision. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus presents the same moment of choice to his disciples: **"Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."** (18:3-4) It is obvious that Jesus is not exhorting his friends to live with the utter simplicity of children in matters of understanding, discernment, or strategy. Rather, he is inviting them to gaze into the eyes of God's love, which grace one and all through the perspective of faith. God's blessing is not the fruit of circumstances, but of surrender to divine fidelity and covenantal care throughout all time.



Job Hears of His Misfortunes by Gustave Doré
Via Wikimedia Commons

For Pondering

- Have you encountered moments in your life where your walk with God urged you to surrender your desire for 'reasons' behind life experiences, and to trust that love is the foundation of your life?
- How do you acknowledge God's goodness when the circumstances of your life seem to turn dark or painful?

- What aspects of Job's story seem particularly applicable to your own life?
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