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Daily Reflections



TO KNOW AS I AM KNOWN

By David C. Robinson, SJ

Excerpts from Today's Readings

Love justice, you who judge the earth; think of the Lord in goodness, and seek him in integrity of heart.

WISDOM 1:1

O LORD, you have probed me and you know me; you know when I sit and when I stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. My journeys and my rest you scrutinize, with all my ways you are familiar. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know the whole of it. Behind me and before, you hem me in and rest your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; too lofty for me to attain.

PSALM 139:1-6

"If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, 'I

am sorry,' you should forgive him." And the Apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." The Lord replied, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

LUKE 17:3-6

Reflection

Throughout Jewish and Christian history, the faithful, in their personal and communal walk with God, have sought to know 'who God is.' They have recognized that the identity and the actions of God forever remain beyond the grasp of their comprehension. They are astounded at the breadth of God's boundless initiative and the mystery of the relationship between the finite and mortal, and the infinite and immortal. Throughout scripture, prophets, teachers, and mystics have pointed to a reality they can hardly name, let alone define or categorize.

In our own time, our attention continues to be drawn more deeply into the illuminating unknown, as we recognize that we do not have the concepts, proofs, ideas, or language that can provide a sufficient foundation for us to say, "We know who God is." As we finally surrender to the wonder of all that lies beyond our horizons, we begin to know God's reality through the unique and unfathomable ways in which we experience God present to us in a manner we cannot name, but only embrace and allow to help shape our very selves anew. This is not a mystery unique to Jewish and Christian faith and practice. Mystics throughout time, drawn through and beyond their formation in a religious or spiritual tradition, are almost universally left with the same perception. If asked to explain what these experiences 'mean,' they respond, "It's all one!" There is not 'God-stuff,' or 'human stuff,' or 'nature stuff.' There is only the One who embraces and embodies all that is or can be. To name or analyze is only a marginal effort that must ultimately dissolve before that which grounds and evolves in everything.

The prophets and wisdom writers of the Old Testament exhort their communities to be obedient to the Covenant commands of God. They are formed in the details of the Law and community order. However, their pleas are not formalistic or rigid. As is noted in Wisdom, the people and their leaders are to **Love justice, you who judge the earth; think of the Lord in goodness, and seek him in integrity of heart.** God's justice is not a structure, but rather a tender and compassionate relationship, a mutual commitment to fulfill the divine vision for humanity.

Knowledge of the Covenant is also a profound knowing in each person of the intimate desire of God for the destiny of all in love and communion. As the psalmist contemplates the way he is known by God, he muses: **O LORD, you have probed me and you know me.** He is overwhelmed by the tireless way in which each and all are surrounded by a love that is infinite in its gracious hope for freedom and peace: **Behind me and before, you hem me in and rest your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; too lofty for me to attain.**

As Jesus journeys on his path of healing and transformative love, he labors to open his disciples' hearts and minds to a mercy that is always free to offer forgiveness and reconciliation. When they attempt to determine the boundaries of their own responsibility to others, he strives to free their souls to recognize that, in God, their possibilities to forgive are endless and endlessly liberating. He reveals the power of mercy to open them to God's mission for saving the world entire. This mercy is the incarnation of love that frees and heals, that brings a new depth of life and endless hope. As Jesus teaches: **"If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, 'I am sorry,' you should forgive him."**

In Matthew's gospel, the mandate is '70 times 7 times!' Love as mercy and mutual reconciliation is the basis of all hope for family, community, and church. When God's love is embraced in families and communities, every person discovers a personal path to fullness—generosity, compassion, patience, gentleness, and endless openness to all.

We are all inheritors of this same promise, this same gift. Our limited notions of love and its attendant mercies only serve to bind us to forms, and rules, and emotional boundaries that can blind us to the limitless possibilities before us. To love like God is to know like God. Love brings a freedom that lifts us from the shackles of judgment, resentment, regret, and mistrust, and opens the endless vistas of mutual joy, trust, and willingness to receive the other into our lives. This is our first and most amazing entrance into a wisdom that truly frees us to grow in the love by which God holds us in an endless revelation of divine knowing, a truth we can live and share forever.



Jesus Shows Love as Mercy
Image created by David Robinson, S.J.

For Pondering

- Have you experienced moments in your life in which your perceptions about others seemed to be transformed by an inner sense of connection to God in your life?
 - What have you learned in your personal spiritual and religious formation about the love of God and what that means for your life in the world?
 - How has your sense of God's love grown and changed through your personal experience of mercy, given and received?
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