

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, May 14th, 2023, Easter VI
Acts 17:22-31 Psalm 66:7-18 1 Peter 3:13-22 John 14:15-21

Do you ever think what is said in the Bible you disagree with or have problems with, in some way? Or am I the only one?

I'm thinking today of Paul himself disagreeing with the Athenian inscription "to an unknown God". The reality is, there is a mystery and shyness to God therefore God is in a sense unknown. This is part of the reality in which we cannot put God in a box. We are not equal with God and therefore by definition cannot fully know God.

Is that what Jesus is talking about when he talks about the Spirit of truth coming to replace him? Maybe thinking how does truth and an unknown God come together?

I am not saying that God is totally unknown and unknowable, but that God can be both knowable and unknowable. There are certain aspects of God we can know but there is a limit to our understanding of God.

The reality is this mystery of God doesn't end with God. You and I are knowable and are known, but not completely. This is the mystery the paradox of life. The journey of knowledge and understanding and wisdom continues.

Jesus says, *this is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*

There are several different ways we can understand why the world cannot receive the spirit of truth, one of the ways is that the world is not overly comfortable with paradox. And perhaps neither are we.

The Spirit of truth, if we are open to the possibility, can help us to grow in our understanding of God, ourselves, and our neighbours.

Jesus says: *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments, or an alternate translation, if you love me, keep my commandments."*

The short answer to how we will keep his commandments, is; to love God, neighbours, and self. And the difficulty is in loving all three without fully knowing

any of the three. This may be because we cannot and should not put any of the three in a box. All three are more complicated than that and cannot be fully contained. We try in a number of different ways. The use of stereotypes and labels is one concerted effort, in this regard. There is another which is more specific and related to a certain set of circumstances.

I have heard that couples in certain places will live together for a period of approximately two years before marriage. The reason being, that they want to fully know and understand the other before taking the next step. Unfortunately, this can backfire because there will be a change and unexpected actions and choices have to be made. One or both will feel they have been deceived because the other is not the person they loved and married in the first place.

Yes, we can understand ourselves and others to a greater degree than we can know God, even when this understanding is never fully complete. Paul talks about this when he says that *In him we live and move and have our being.*'

This suggests we are contained in God, and God is beyond us and our understanding, but that there is a comfort there, in God being with us wherever we are.

Amen

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you
and give you peace;
and the blessing ...