

# Finding God

*Readings:* Job chapter 23, verses 1 – 9; Matthew chapter 25, verses 31 – 39

I will preach from that agonising cry of Job; “O that I knew where I might find him”. It’s the cry of Everyone at some point in life. As with Job ‘stuff happens’; which overwhelms us; we find impossible it to explain or understand. If we believe in God Job’s cry is wrung out of us; “O that I knew...” Elsewhere Job had cried out’ “Truly you are a God who hides himself” and it was that thought which prompted his cry.

And, for many people, that is the problem. God is hiding Himself from us and so we cry out; “O that I knew where I might find him.”

But hang on a moment. Is God really hiding from us or is it we who are in hiding from Him? The story of Adam in the Garden of Eden (which is Everyman’s story) says that the truth is we are the ones in hiding.

You remember the story. Adam had broken the one commandment and when he realised what he had done, his reaction was to hide away in the bushes. When God came down in the cool of the evening for their usual sundowner together Adam was nowhere to be seen. It is God who asks the question; “Adam, where are you?” The fact of the matter is that Adam’s sin had effectively alienated and separated him from God and he was the one who was hiding. As Isaiah put it in one memorable sentence; “Your sins have caused a separation between you and your God.” In other words it is very often the case that God seems hidden from us because we are the ones in hiding.

But it is not always the case. Often enough we are not at fault. Imagine a Christian in Syria who is caught up between President Assad’s murderous regime and the brutality of ISIL and the bombing of Allied aeroplanes and has lost everything. God where are you? Or the parents of a young child stricken with leukaemia. Or the wife of a young policeman run down trying to stop a stolen car. Where are you God?

I once stood amongst the giant granite boulders of the Matopo Hills in Zimbabwe and cried out “Help”. And the only answer I got was the sound of my own voice echoing back at me. “Help; help; help” That is how it feels for many people.

So where may we expect to find God.? The short answer is – Everywhere. For God is everywhere to be found. Earlier in the service we said together the wonderful words of Psalm 139.

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol you are there.  
If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.  
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,"  
even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

But what I want to do is narrow that universal Presence down to a specific instance. When God wanted to reveal Himself fully and perfectly He did it by becoming human. At the heart of our Christian Faith is the assertion that God became Man in Christ. Divinity is focussed in humanity. And I cannot forget the Parable that Jesus told which expresses the challenge of this truth.

It is the familiar parable of the Sheep and the Goats. (Matthew 25) Jesus spoke about how we shall be judged at the Final Judgement and said;

"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?"

"And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren you did it to me"

God confronts us in the needs of others and through others. I confess that I have never seen any Visions or heard any Voices, and everything I know and experienced of God has come via other people. Which is not to say that this is the only way in which we meet God. But it is a way less recognised.

There is a corollary to this. It was voiced by Martin Luther who said that we should be a Christ to our neighbour.

**Now there's a challenge for you.**