

“Mind’s Eye”

Acts 17:22-31 & John 14:15-21

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There were several esteemed Bible scholars describing the historical Jesus. After much debate a guest got up and said, “I have been listening to your concern about why people are not talking much about the historical Jesus. It is not a big issue, for what really matters is who Jesus is for each person. It would be far more helpful for each one of you to share who Jesus is for you personally. For me, Jesus is my encourager. Jesus is always with me through thick or thin, through joy or sorrow. Jesus encourages me to love. Jesus encourages me with forgiveness, with fresh starts, by reminding me that I am a beloved member of God’s family, created in the image of God. Jesus encourages me to use the unique gifts, abilities, and blessings God gives me to make the world a more joyful, peaceful, beautiful, and loving place. This person went on to share specific times when they were encouraged by Jesus.

The Apostle Paul tells the Council of Athens, who Jesus is to him. **Acts 17:22-31 (NLT) “So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’ This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I’m telling you about. “Jesus is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. Jesus, himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. From one man God created all the nations throughout the whole earth. God decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and God determined their boundaries. “God’s purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward God and find God—though God is not far from any one of us. For in God we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are God’s offspring.’ And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. “God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now God commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to God. For God has set a day for judging the world with justice by Jesus, the man God has appointed, and God proved to everyone who this is by raising Jesus from the dead.”**

Today we celebrate and honor our teachers; those who help us see God. Teachers share how God has revealed Godself in the past, how God is restoring their life, and invite us to share what God is doing in our life. All of us are disciples commissioned to continually learn about God and teach others about God. All of us are disciples commissioned to strive to live like Jesus and striving to help others live like Jesus. We sum this up as Know Christ, Show Christ.

Jesus promised the disciples, I will never leave you. You will know me for the Advocate will always be with you. Jesus said. **John 14:15-21(NLT) “If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and God will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you, the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit, because it isn’t looking for the Holy Spirit and doesn’t recognize the Holy Spirit. But you know the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”**

God promises to reveal Godself to us. Often we experience God when we follow God’s commandments which can all be fulfilled by one action, love. God is continually restoring our soul enabling us to love. Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as our Advocate. The Holy Spirit has been translated, named, and explained in numerous ways such as the third Person of the Trinity, Comforter, Friend, Counselor, Breathe, Wisdom, Encourager, Holy Ghost, Wind, Advocate, Translator and Helper. Nelson’s Bible Dictionary defines the Holy

Spirit as “the power by which believers come to Christ and see with new eyes of faith, The Holy Spirit is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Like the eyes of the body through which we see physical things, The Holy Spirit is seldom in focus to be seen directly because the Holy Spirit is the one through whom all else is seen in a new light.” The Holy Spirit helps us understand our walk with God, unifies us with God and other believers, convicts us of sin, reveals the truth, transforms the unclean to clean, supplies gifts, hears, guides, serves, witnesses, glorifies, speaks, illumines, works, prepares, empowers, confesses, bears, intercedes, pledges, guarantees, liberates, transforms, energizes, redeems, gives, teaches, reminds, and the list goes on and on. The Holy Spirit is named in so many different ways and the Spirit’s work described in so many ways, because the Holy Spirit does something different for each of us. God made us unique. God loves us too much to mold us all into the same cookie cutter believer. Instead God cherishes our uniqueness, measures our perception, and considers our situation; so, the Holy Spirit provides us exactly with what we truly need. Of course, what we need may be very different than what we want and God knows the difference. One’s relationship with God is personal, unique, and evolves as we change and our situation changes. Some days we need to be encouraged, others comforted, others convicted and on and on.

I once served with a Catholic Priest, Father Mark, who was a magician before becoming a priest. One day he was with a group of youth showing them a coin trick. He explained how magic is like our faith. It is more fun if you enjoy the experience rather than trying to figure it out or explain it. Perhaps your relationship with God will be more fun if you savor the experience rather than trying to figure God out.

The musician, DC Talk, have fun singing about their experiences of the Holy Spirit in their song, “Mind’s Eye”. “You know what I'm going through, I know this is true ‘Cause You stood in my shoes, Desire's inside of me, But it's hard to believe, In what you cannot see, Can you catch the wind? Can you see God? I've never seen the wind, I've seen the effects of the wind, But I've never seen the wind, Can you see the breeze? Its presence is revealed by the leaves on a tree, There's a mystery to it, An image of my faith in the unseen, In my mind's eye, I see Your face, You smile as you show me grace, In my mind's eye, You take my hand, We walk through foreign lands, The foreign lands of life. In my mind I'm where I belong, As I rest in your arms And like a child I hold on to you, We can ride the storm, Endure the pain, You comfort me in my hurricane, And I'll never be alone again, In my mind's eye, I can see Your face, Love pours down in a shower of grace, Life is a gift that You choose to give, I believe we eternally live, Faith is the evidence of things unseen, People tell me that You're just a dream, But they don't know You the way that I do, You're the one I live to pursue, In my mind's eye, I see You there again, In my mind's eye, I know You'll meet me there my Friend, In my mind's eye, I know You're there, I can touch You there, In my mind's eye, I want You there, I need You there, I see You there, I know You care and I believe.”

We could compare the Holy Spirit to the presence, love, and support of Derek’s father. Olympian Derek Redmond was determined to win the gold medal in the 400-meter race at Barcelona in 1992. The race begins with Derek seizing the lead. Heading down the backstretch, only 175 meters from the finish line, Derek is a shoo-in to win. But then Derek hears a pop. It is his right hamstring. He pulls up lame, looking as if he has been shot, his leg quivering, Derek begins to hop on the other leg, and then he slows down and falls to the track. Medical personnel run toward him as he sprawls on the ground, holding his hamstring. There is a stir in the stands. Jim Redmond, seeing his son in trouble, makes his way to help his son. Derek realizes that his dream of an Olympic medal is gone. He perceives that he is alone as the other runners streak across the finish line. Tears pour down Derek’s face. When the medical crew arrives with a stretcher, Derek tells them, “I’m going to finish my race.” He struggles to his feet and starts hobbling. The crowd realizes that Derek isn’t dropping out of the race. He is refusing to be carried off in defeat. Derek painfully hops fiercely determined to finish. Derek feels alone. In reality his dad, the crowd, and the world are with him. Derek’s shattered dream, pain, and heartache resonates with other people’s experiences. Inspired by his determination they cheer for him. They rise to their feet. Their cries grow louder and louder, building into a thundering roar. Jim reaches his son, hugs him, and says, “I’m here, we will finish together.” Derek puts his arms around his father’s shoulders and sobs. Together, arm in arm, they struggle toward the finish line with 65,000 people cheering, clapping, and crying. A few steps from the end Jim releases his son, so he can cross the finish line by himself. Jim Redmond tells the press afterward, “I’m the proudest father alive. I’m prouder of him than I would have been if he had won the gold medal. It took a lot of guts for him to do what he did.” Together, they kept a promise they had made to finish the race, no matter what.

We are never alone the Holy Spirit is always with us whether the Spirit is cheering us on, carrying us, helping us finish the race, or celebrating our love. Jesus called the disciples to show them how to love and be loved, to reveal how to live a peace-filled, joyful abundant life. For three years, Jesus is physically right there with them. They never could have done it without him. In their faith run, Jesus has always been there. Jesus' physical presence has been their inspiration. The miracles, teachings, and friendship kept them going. Now their worst fear is about to happen. Jesus has explained how he is going to physically leave them. How will they go forward? Jesus assures them that after his death, he will be resurrected always with them through the Holy Spirit. The nature of Jesus' presence will change but Jesus will never leave or forsake them or us. We do not run this race alone. Sometimes our perception is inaccurate. Sometimes we do not perceive God's loving presence, but that does not change the reality that the Holy Spirit is always with us.

“One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only. This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord, “You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?” The Lord replied, “The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you.”

The how and the way God nourishes us in the Lord's Supper is a mystery. During Holy Communion, ponder how God's love unites you with God and others. During the Great Thanksgiving, name that for which you are grateful. During the Agape Meal, rejoice in love which endures forever. Open yourself to the bread of life and living water. How would you complete this sentence: “God is my...” Please share your answering by writing it on the white board in Meisenheimer Hall during fellowship today. Amen