

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Aug 7th 2015

“You have heard God referred to as a ‘Presence.’ There is a reason for that. It is because God is always here. Now. In the present moment and nowhere else.” (Douglas Cooper, PhD. Gentle Dove: The Holy Spirit, God’s Greatest Gift.)

One of my past supervisors frequently referenced this quote, or something similar to it. I see what Dr. Cooper is going for, but I think his syntax is off. At the very least, this image of God is only part of the whole picture. What he means is that we are in the present moment, in a particular place, and we can’t be anywhere else. Therefore, God meets us here and in the present moment.

To say that God is nowhere else is, I think, limiting God. If I say God can only be here, where I am, I deny that God can also be halfway across the world with people whose language and culture are foreign to me. To say that God can only be in my present moment is also an attempt to limit the Infinite. For God, all moments are present. Some moments are, from our perspective, past or future. That does not mean it isn’t worthwhile to reflect and realize where God has been in our past moments.

“Ask now of the days of old, before your time, ever since God created man upon the earth; ask from one end of the sky to the other: Did anything so great ever happen before?” Moses invites the Israelites to remember how God was active in their past. They are a chosen people. Sometimes, it makes a difference in our present moments to recall how richly blessed we have been.

I was recently able to catch up with many old friends in person (a rare occurrence for any adult who didn’t take up residence near her hometown or college). We remembered who we were when we became friends: what jokes and experiences we shared, what we were learning together, what we helped each other work through. Reflected in our memories of each other, we saw the ways we each had grown. It brought me joy to see the people my friends are becoming now: husbands and wives, parents, more sure of their vocations and careers, bravely transitioning to something new, doing good in the world, and finding joy. Sometimes we miss the present moment, and we need to look back to see that God was there. Then, it is easier to see that God is also here, now. (Maybe we can say hello, and thanks, when we see God.)

It is particularly important to remember when the present moment looks bleak. Jesus tells us that being chosen, while including such blessings, also means the way will be more difficult. “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny [themselves], take up [their] cross, and follow me.” Walking with God will not always be easy; but, the walking will be with God. Remembering that God has been present and is

present can help us take the step to trust that God will be in our future moments, too.

Molly Mattingly-Creighton University's Campus Ministry