

Dear Friend

On the day after Trinity Sunday, I'd like us to continue to reflect on the nature of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As I mentioned in my reflection yesterday, we need to try and find a new way of understanding our God that avoids the use of exclusively masculine words. I remember as a child, whenever I thought about God, which was not very often, I conceived of him as a distant, stern stereo-typically Victorian kind of father figure who didn't like us very much and certainly didn't want us to enjoy life! The worst kind of father in fact! For those who have had a difficult relationship with their fathers, thinking of God as Father can be equally difficult. Somehow we need to move away from trying to understand God in terms of our own experiences - formative though they are. Once I realised the glorious truth that God actually loves me and wants to give me fullness of life - that God is in fact the best kind of Father - I was able to leave behind the negative and false image of God my childhood self had constructed.

The reading from Isaiah we heard in yesterday's service is taken from one of the greatest chapters in the whole of scripture - Isaiah 40. Please take some time today to re-read the whole chapter, which reminds us both of the limitless power of God for whom all the nations are just a drop in a bucket or dust on the scales - in other words they're not even worth measuring. Nevertheless this limitless God offers comfort to his people, tenderness, and strength for the weary ones, who tends his flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs in his arms and carrying them close to his heart and gently leading those with young. What an extraordinary picture of contrasts! This is one of the great mysteries of God, that he is both as high above us and as distant from us as the stars, yet he is also as close to us as our breath. Although we are part of that dust on the scales that is virtually weightless, we are also of infinite value and worth to the One who knit us together in our mother's wombs and who numbers the hairs on our heads.

So our God is Father but not in a masculine sense; he is also Mother. God is full of tenderness, compassion and care. God is happy to portray himself in feminine terms - a mother hen seeking to gather her brood under her wings, or a mother with a baby at her breast, who even though she may forget her child, will never forget us. (Isaiah 49.15). It is a great pity that the English language has no gender neutral personal pronoun - something that has been recognised for centuries but a problem that has not yet been solved. There have been attempts in the past to invent new words, but these have not passed into common usage.

So it seems to me we have to use terms like "Father" and the personal pronoun "He" recognising their limitations and trying not to allow our past experiences to prevent us from experiencing the amazing tender-hearted love

of God for each of us. A love that embraces every single human being with a warmth and gentleness that is higher and deeper than anything we could ever know.

May God our Father/Mother bless you, keep you close to his heart and reveal in the depths of your being his perfect love.

Verse for today: Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary they will walk and not be faint.

*Isaiah 40.31*



With my love and prayers

Simon