



LIFE *On* MISSION

ADVENTIST CHURCH *in Sydney*

Your Picture of God

Sermon Outline

If someone asked you to draw a picture of God, what would you draw?

Some people draw light, a heart, a cross, an old man on a throne, others draw fire, and images that represent rage. What causes us to have so many different depictions? The truth is that it has to do with far more than just your artistic abilities. The image of God that you have in your mind is deeply rooted in your culture, upbringing, theological education, your blessings or challenges in life, and many other influences.

One reality that I find both interesting and troubling is that people who worship together every week in the same church don't all have the same image of God in their minds. I wonder how many depictions we would have in church today. One would think that if you come from the same denomination and theological beliefs that you would share the same image of God. But, then again we all come from different places, experiences, and educations. I wonder how many divisions that take place in the church are caused by differences in this fundamental truth. **What does God look like?**

Can we know what God looks like?

John 4:24 states that God is Spirit

Hebrews 12:29 says that God is an all consuming fire

Exodus 33:20 God tells Moses that no-one can see His face and live

God is an infinitely amazing and glorious being. So really the answer is no... and yes... (we'll get there in a second).

So, are we left to wonder and debate what God looks like? The answer is extremely important because closely related to His image, is His character. In fact, in that same passage in Exodus 33 God relates how He looks to what He does.

So here is the issue that every human being must contend with:

-How many of my thoughts of God and His character are actually based on who God really is?...

-If you see God as fire you may think of Him as exacting and cruel.

-If you see God as a heart you may think of Him as a God who hands out cheap grace

-If you have experienced a lot of heartbreak you may think of God as one who has turned His back on you.

-If you had a harsh, exacting father that may have imprinted on your concept of God

-What is really God, and what is the god our minds have concocted?

The real trouble comes when the challenges of life become bigger than the god our minds have created... our faith can crumble. God must be bigger than what our minds can hold.

The truth is that even if you've never thought about drawing a picture of God, His image is closely related in your mind to His character.

So, does God ever tell us what He looks like?... So that we have an image to relate to His character? The comforting answer is 'yes'.

-Col. 1:15 tells us that "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God".

-John 14:9 Jesus says "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father"

-(Jesus) "is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person". Hebrews 1:3

Here is the point. **When we think of God we are supposed to think of Jesus. That statement is not a mushy sentimental idea of some preacher. It is the statement of God Himself. "For in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily". Col. 2:9**

God knew that as humans we are very visual people. He knew that there would be questions about His character until He came and gave us a tangible, living representation of Himself. *Jesus came to clear up any questions about God.*

Here is the good news:

-That means the character of the Father, and the character of the Son are one. Too many people believe that the Father wants to kill them and Jesus wants to save them. But if we are to think of Jesus when we think of God that means their will and love are one in the same.

Here is something troubling to think about:

You can believe in a god that doesn't even exist- and this is what most of us have created. We have created a representation of God in our minds that is too much based on experience, education, and our feelings. The truth is probably that the representation of God that we have created in our minds is convenient to our current condition, or is useful for our own purposes. If you like to judge people- your image of God is probably pretty judgmental. If you have a hard time understanding the commandments of God, chances are your image of God is a push over. Etc. This is exactly why the Israelites couldn't look upon Moses' face when He had been in the presence of God and His face was shining. It wasn't what they wanted to see. (Ex. 34)

But when we ask God to show us the true Christ, through study of the Word, prayer and providence, He will answer. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." (John 16:13)

"And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, We can have all the prophecies and timelines worked out but if we don't think of Jesus when you think of God you are off track. We can know that the Sabbath is Saturday but if our image of God doesn't look like Jesus we probably are not witnessing to God's character in the Spirit of Truth." 2 Peter 1:19

And isn't this what people need today more than ever? With all the confusion out there about God. With all the sin, and addiction, and politics, and war, and heartbreak... don't people need a clear image of God?

The even greater news is that God isn't asking us to simply put our faith in a word, or a promise, of myths, or fairy tales... God asks us to believe in a Person- a real life person. In a very real way we can insert Jesus into the faith verse in Hebrews 11:1 "Jesus is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

This is our calling. To make God known through Jesus. The world needs it now more than ever.

Here is our action plan:

1. Get to know God as Jesus. This may take a reeducation for us. We may need to really experience the Gospel for the first time. We must seek the Father through Jesus, and the Word in a way we never have before. We must ask God to wipe away everything that would cause us to see God through any other image than Jesus. Daily commitment to seeking God through Jesus in His Word is key to revival, or in this case re-imaging.
2. Help others know that God is Jesus. How do we do that? By doing what Jesus did. We must go where there is pain in our communities. We have for far too long hung back when people are suffering. If we really believe in Christ's Method of revealing God then when there are hurting people we should be going- even running to their aide. We should be partnering with community organizations that ease suffering. We need to be present in our cities and towns. If your church were to close, would your community miss it? Is there pain somewhere? Why aren't we there?
3. We need to love each other. It was one of the last commandments that Jesus gave His disciples (John 13:34). In this post- Christian society we find ourselves people don't understand church but they still long for meaningful, even spiritual relationships. If the church isn't loving itself how can it love others? If smaller groups of the church aren't getting together on a regular basis outside of the church walls how can it be a thriving community that bridges the gap between meeting people and helping them make a decision for Jesus? Programs in the church educate people, but true relationships make disciples.

Uplifting Jesus, Enriching Lives, and Building Community- it's Christ's method.

Through this action plan Jesus has become more real to me everyday.

So, when you think of God what do you see? I hope its Jesus. That's how God wants to be known. The world needs to know this now more than ever.

Insert Appeal Here: