

If You've Seen Me
John 14:6-11

Slide 1

Last Sunday, I asked you to mentally or physically draw a picture of what you think God looks like.

It may have sounded silly or trite, but I was serious. As preacher and author Trevor Hudson put it: *“In each of our hearts and minds there is drawn our picture of God and the way we live is profoundly shaped by that picture.”*

He goes on to say that when *“distortions creep into our picture of God, their negative effects reverberate throughout our lives.”*

“Those who view God as an impersonal force tend toward a cold and vague relationship with Him. Those who see God as a heavenly tyrant, intent on hammering anyone who wanders outside His laws, seldom abandon themselves with joy to the purposes of His kingdom. Those who imagine God to be a scrupulous bookkeeper, determined to maintain up-to-date accounts of every personal sin and short-coming, rarely acknowledge their inner contradictions and struggles in His presence. Those who regard God as a divine candy machine (just say a prayer and you can get what you want) inevitably end up in disillusionment.”

This is why we need to form an accurate picture of God. One that will constantly change and evolve for all eternity because God's always changing and evolving.

Therefore, the first place we should start is with God Himself. As one author put it, *“God is a boundless mystery,”* which is how God described Himself.

As you recall, when Moses encountered God in the burning bush and asked Him what His name was, God responded with the unpronounceable tetra-grammatron or four Hebrew letters: Yod He Vav He... YHWH or I Am.

We actually have no idea how this tetra-grammatron is pronounced. The Jews considered the name of God so holy they wouldn't pronounce it aloud.

So, when they read the Scriptures aloud, they replaced tetra-grammatron YHWH with Adonai.

Last week I compared God to fire, author John Powell compares God to the sun: *"It is the nature of the sun always to give off warmth and light. The sun always shines, always radiates its warmth and light. There is no way in which the sun can act against its essential nature. Nor is there any way in which we can stop it from shining. We can allow its light to fill our senses and make us warm; alternatively, we can separate ourselves from its rays by putting up an umbrella or going indoors. But whatever we may do, we know that the sun itself does not change."*

Another writer stated, *"If ever we think that we have finally got God all worked out, then we can be sure that we are wrong."*

Slide 2

A person's name in the Bible was meant to reveal something about the person and there are many names used to describe the character and heart of God.

There's YHWH, or God, as I've already mentioned, but there's also "Adonai" which is Greek for "Lord" or "Lord Master."

People throughout the Old Testament also used the word Adonai when addressing humans who were master or lord over them.

Whenever you see the title “LORD” in all capital letters in your Bible, it stands for the title “YHWH” and when you see it with a capital “L” and the rest of the word lower case, it stands for “*Adonai*.”

And since we’re talking about God’s name, here are just a few of the names that are used in the Bible to describe Him:

El Shaddai: Which means God Almighty or Mighty Mountain

El Elyon: The Most High God

Jehovah: I Am or The Eternal Living One

Jehovah Jireh: The LORD is our Provider

Jehovah Rapha: The LORD is our Healer

Jehovah Nissi: The LORD is our Banner

Jehovah Shalom: The LORD is our Peace

Jehovah Raah: The LORD is our Shepherd

Jehovah Shammah: The LORD is Here

He’s also called “*The Ancient of Days*” in the Book of Daniel. El Roi, the “God Who sees me” by Hagar in Genesis 16.

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, and Immanuel by the prophet Isaiah.

All of these names are windows. Windows where we’re allowed to glimpse into the infinite mystery of God. But we have one window, one flesh and blood window, into the heart and soul and mind of God.

Anyone know the name above all names? Yes! Jesus... Savior! Immanuel... God made flesh.

It’s through Jesus that we get a whole new insight into the heart and nature of God.

John 14:6-7, *“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”*

That applies as much to us today as it did when Jesus first explained it to Thomas thousands of years ago.

When Philip asks Jesus to show him the Father, Jesus explained in John 14:9-11, *“Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.”*

We saw Jehovah Rapha, the LORD our healer, when Jesus cured people of diseases and drove out demons. We saw Jehovah Jireh, the LORD our provider, when He fed thousands with bread and fish.

We saw Jehovah Shammah, the LORD is here, when He became Immanuel.

Jesus is the Logos, the Word of God made flesh, the Ancient of Days, the Alpha and Omega who was with God and was God from the very beginning and through Whom all things were created and came into being.

He is Jehovah Raah, the Good Shepherd. He is El Shaddai, our Mighty Commander and Chief, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is a friend of sinners, but most important, He is love personified.

Slide 3

In his first letter, John, who knew Jesus personally, said that *“God is love.”* Why does he say that? Because He had seen God through the love and words and deeds of Jesus Himself.

Jesus, said Paul, *“is the image of the invisible God. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.”* (Colossians 1:15, 19)

If we want to get a picture of God, we must look in the direction of Jesus. Through word and deed, dying and rising, Jesus introduces us to what God is really like.

“Every idea and assumption that we have about God,” says Trevor Hudson, *“must be measured against the person of Jesus. If they’re contradicted by what we have come to know about God through Jesus, they need to be relinquished. If not, then they can safely be included in our picture of God.”*

That’s the beautiful thing about God. Our picture of Him can be redrawn and should be constantly redrawn as our knowledge and experience of Him grows and expands.

Cardinal Basil Hume, former archbishop of Westminster, was given the chance to re-draw His picture of God.

As a boy, he had been raised by a good but stern mother. She used to say, *“If I see you, my son, stealing an apple from my pantry, I’ll punish you, but if you take an apple and I don’t see you, Almighty God will see you, and He will punish you.”*

Well, you can imagine the picture of God his young, impressionable mind probably painted.

But when he got older and began studying the Bible and experiencing God in his life, his faith and understanding began to mature.

He realized that if God saw him stealing apples from his mother's pantry He might have said, *"Why don't you take two, my son? I have plenty."*

Jesus told Philip that He was in the Father and Father was in Him. His nature was God's nature. The love that He showed to the world was the love of His Father for all of His children.

Remember at the beginning of this message how John Powell compared God's nature to that of the sun?

In the same way, the love that we see in Jesus, the divine nature that we see in Jesus, is like the light that comes from the sun; it never ceases.

Like the sun, we have the freedom to open ourselves to this love and be transformed by it, or we can separate ourselves from it, but we can't stop Him from continuously sending out the warm rays of His love.

At the heart of the unbound Mystery of God and of God Made Flesh is a blazing love that created us and searches for us every moment.

He desires to bring us, along with all His creation, into a wholeness that comes from our deepening knowledge of Him and our growing and ever-changing relationship with Him.

If there is any doubt as to the length and depth and breadth of God's love for you and me, all you have to do is look at the cross. Who among us can contemplate such love?

Yet, looking at the cross, seeing Jesus hanging there, we catch a glimpse of how God in Christ absorbs the very worst that we can do; bearing it sacrificially in His own body for us, His prodigal sons and daughters.

Contemplate the crucified Christ and try to comprehend the meaning of what He did and why He did it.

A mother was once asked which of her three children she loved the most. *“I love them all equally,”* she said, but her friend pressed her.

“Sure, every parent says that but, really, which one do you love the most.” *“Okay,”* she replied, *“fair enough. I love them all the same but when one of them struggles and is in trouble, then my heart goes out to that child the most.”*

The cross is an immensely rich symbol of the ever-present power of God’s love.

Slide 4

Conclusion

Then there’s the infinitely rich symbol of hope, the empty tomb.

Not only does God experience our suffering as though it were His own, but He’s also relentlessly seeking to bring light and life where there seems to be only darkness and death.

When this happens, we experience what would be called a “little Easter.”

When Jesus was nailed to the cross and suffered, when He breathed His last and gave up His spirit, the Disciples and His followers were crushed. He was finished. His life and His ministry were over.

Death and evil had defeated God’s love and then, three days later, they discovered the empty tomb and the truth that not even darkness or death could defeat the power and the love of God.

When we're given courage to keep going, to keep living through the pain, that's a "little Easter."

When we listen to a friend and they open up to us and share their grief and pain, that's a "little Easter."

When we're truly able to forgive those who've wronged us or abused us, that's a "little Easter."

Any time that we're surprised with new possibilities for life and healing in the midst of brokenness and decay, that's a "little Easter."

It gives us a glimpse of the resurrection power of God's love made manifest in the crucified and risen Jesus.

People from all walks of life felt accepted and welcomed by Him as He consistently reached out in friendship to those around Him.

Whether it was a well-to-do public official like Zacchaeus, lepers living in forced isolation, or children who simply wanted to sit on His lap or feel His hand upon their head or shoulder. Everyone seemed at home in His presence.

As theologian Albert Nolan explained: *"Because Jesus was looked upon as a man of God and a prophet, they would have interpreted His gesture of friendship as God's approval of them. They were now acceptable to God."*

Philip in John 14:8, said *"Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied,"* and He did.

Jesus told His disciples in John 14:11, *"Believe me that I am in the Father and Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves."*

Jesus said that our suffering is His suffering, our grief is His grief. In our darkness and pain, Jesus is constantly seeking to bring about another “little Easter” for us.

On the cross Jesus died so that we would know the full extent of His offer of forgiveness and His resurrection is our hope of a future together with Him forever.