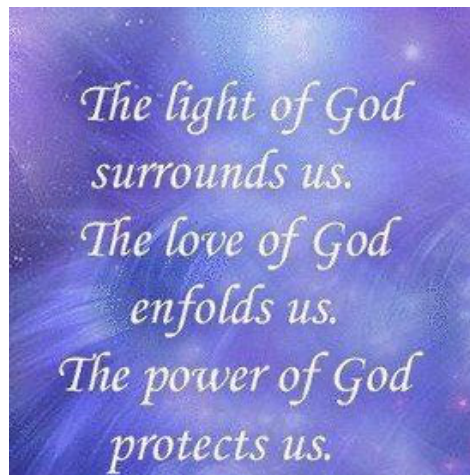


Sunday Reflection Searching for God



Acts 17:22-28

Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.'

What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.

From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

Reflection

The 'unknown god', I am always gripped by that statement, it puts into words our hearts desire to find God.

Paul was intrigued by what he found in Athens, the vibrant city of philosophers and debaters. There were hundreds of altars to different gods and deities, yet still there was one for whom they were looking carved to the 'unknown god'.

Paul from his own intimate experience, is able to say 'I know that God. The God you have been searching for.' And I can picture him excitedly telling them of this God. Who is the one who created all things, who allotted time and the boundaries of space. The one who gives life and breath. The one 'In whom we live and move and have our very being'.

Wow! Isn't this who they, who we, have been searching for in our night watches in our fragile lives?

Not a god who is confined to shrines made by human hands, not one who needs to be satisfied with gold and silver, and the service and sacrifice of human hands. This God has no need of us... Yet...yet still searches us out, and delights to be searched for. Who desires to be intimate with us, out of nothing more than Gods deep, deep love for us and for all of humanity.

I am reminded of a testimony shared in my local church when we lived on Romney Marsh in Kent. An amazing Christian man in his 80's, who sang hymns like an angel, stood up and shared of the sad loss of both of his sons. The younger had led a troubled life and Frank was so desperate to know that he was safe with God in heaven that he pleaded with God on his knees to let him know that this was true. The following day he was in a huge traffic jam when a huge lorry drew up alongside him, the burly driver wound down his window and indicated for Frank to do the same, he leaned out and shouted down "I know this sounds strange but God has just told me to say to you 'Your sons with me' "

This is our God. Amen

Self-Reflection

What would your testimony be of God's presence in your life I wonder?

And if you haven't quite felt it? Jesus says 'Seek and ye shall find' (Matthew 7:7) and "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13).

You might like to find a quiet space this week and ask God to reveal him/herself to you. You might say ' God I am searching for you. I open my heart to you, come into my life'.

You can say it now just where you are, you can say it in your garden or in a room with a lit candle.

And God is faithful... you may have a dazzling transforming spiritual moment as Paul did, or a more gradual sense of warmth and knowledge of God's presence being with you. It may come from the words of another. A moment in nature that you know is just for you. The possibilities with God are endless! But know God will never turn you away or turn away from you.

And be prepared to be used yourself by God to help another on their journey too.

We have a living God, worth searching for, worth committing our life too. Amen

Worship Hymns

Here I am Lord (I the lord of Sea and Sky, I have heard my people cry):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcXOkht8w7c>

How Great thou Art :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cc0QVWzCv9k>

How the Deer Pants for the Water (my soul longs after you) – Lucy Gibson (attached)

Prayers

Almighty God,

Creator of all, we praise you.

We thank you that we matter to you, that your heart is always open to us.

Help us in our search for you.

Use us to bring your love and healing to others.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We ask your protection for hospitals, care homes, medical centres, mental health units, communities, schools and workplaces as lockdown eases.

We pray against a second wave of spread and an end to the virus.

As we move forward may we do so with care for one another and for your creation.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have lost jobs and livelihoods, for those fearful of the future.
For our children and young people in all the uncertainty.
For the vulnerable, the homeless and hungry.
For those whose homes are not safe places to be.
For those who have loved ones who are missing.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God,
We pray for one another and those we hold dear.
For all who are unwell.
For all who are depressed and anxious.
We lift before you the recently departed and their loved ones.
And give thanks for those whom we have loved.
Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

*We take a moment to lift the prayers of our own hearts before God...
Joining all our prayers together we say the prayer our saviour taught us:*

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Blessing

The light of God surround us.
The love of God enfold us.
The power of God protect us.
And the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you and those whom you love always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ Amen**