

SERMON FOR 25 AUGUST 2024
ST JUDE'S, BRIGHTON

[One of the reasons I'm here at St Jude's etc and an Anecdote from 'Blunders and Blessings'.]

This week's letter from me to you focussed on the benefit of either deliberate or accidental introductions and discoveries we encounter in life. As children we used to play hide and seek, discovering along the way how best to hide and how good the others were at finding us. If we hid too well we discovered that they would tire while trying to find us and we'd have to come out of hiding because of their lack of interest in us.

This morning's gospel story concerns the introduction to a group of Jews and some interested followers of Jesus of some hidden truths about God and Jesus. If you want to attach a title to my sermon it can perhaps be 'Seeking God hidden in Jesus'.

I believe science in its many forms seeks and discovers the hidden truths, and expands our understanding of where we live and in what context our lives are lived. For the believer in a God who created all that is there is nothing that was not created by God. A great deal of the truth hidden but ripe for its discovery. Evolution is an inherent force within creation, for believers it is proof that our God continues to create, give new form to life, and has made it accessible for us to discover. God is God every moment of every day on earth and in whatever unit of time is applicable to the expanding universe, God is God. I will be who I will be, God told Moses. But seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you!

The authors of both Testaments of the Bible similarly write for our benefit their results of seeking and finding God within the context of the political and social life of their own time. We notice the evolution of thought and understanding about God contained in the bible's books. This continued into the social and political time of Jesus with the hidden nature of God in Jesus - there to be discovered - but also there to become tired of.

Today's gospel reveals that the attendant Jews and a number of Jesus' disciples listened to the contrast Jesus makes with the manna the Israelite ancestors ate during the exodus. This contrast includes the added potency of his body. Its potency to save is greater than the manna provided by God to those traversing the wilderness. The wilderness manna was a temporary solution to the hunger and starvation of their wilderness experience. It did not take from them the ultimate experience of death.

The introduction to the Jews that to eat the body of Jesus as one eats bread and would lead to eternal life was anathema and a great number of disciples fell away from following Jesus. They tired of seeking. They were not open to the fact that God's revelation is an evolutionary dimension in creation.

Let's not follow them in their tiredness. John throughout his gospel is providing a theological exposition of the God of creation who can be found in Jesus. John is removing the cloud of unknowing and reveals to us his discovery. *"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them"* John 6.56 *'so whoever eats me will live because of me.'* John 6.57 *"This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."* John 6.51

The words used at the consecration of the bread and wine used in our service today (*“Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* And *“Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*) are fashioned from the words in St Paul’s First letter to the Corinthians 11. 23 - 27

Hide and seek or to put it another way - to seek for that which is hidden.

I was not taught at school why an appreciation of learning was available to me. I was not taught how to study while at school. It was all hidden from me. Until by the grace of a good teacher I was able to seek and find an understanding of how to learn, and importantly, how I could appreciate the joy of successful results.

Maybe you will understand why I hope that with the children and young adults at church, we are able to show for their benefit, an appreciation for and a joy in ‘Seeking God hidden in Jesus’. That it may require an untiring knock on the knowledge door of Christian faith. And although our salvation is assured through faith in Jesus that does not prevent us from seeking to know more - hidden from us for a moment - waiting for us to seek it out.

Fr John