

Friendship with God 3 – 26th October 2025

Jeremiah 9:23-24. Psalm 46. Philippians 3:4b-11. John 17:20-26.

Knowing God

This is the third sermon in our series called 'Friendship with God'. Today we are invited to reflect on the subject of 'Knowing God'.

Chris has chosen some great readings to help us explore this subject this morning, although I think we could spend a week talking and exploring this.

Our first reading from the prophet Jeremiah challenges us to be able to say that we have the understanding to know the Lord, that the Lord *"exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight."*

Jeremiah doesn't explain in this writing, how we are to gain that level of understanding, but Jeremiah is definitively stating that God *"exercises kindness, justice and righteousness"*.

The psalmist describes God as our refuge or fortress, and it is stated three times in this eleven verse psalm; in the first, seventh and eleventh verses. It conjures up a picture of a God whom we can trust in the trials and tribulations of life. The most quoted verse is the first part of v10:

"He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God..."

This is one way to get to know God – disconnecting from the busyness of life and spending time in focussed meditation and contemplation, listening for God's word. We shall know God's word, because it will lead us to reflect God's nature; to exercise kindness, justice and righteousness. If we hear something different, it is not from God.

Paul's letter to the church in Philippi was carried back to Philippi by Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus had been trusted by the church to take money to Paul in prison, and then he stayed there with him for a while, including a near fatal illness. Epaphroditus is perhaps an unsung hero that enabled Paul's ministry from prison.

Paul's letter can be a challenge to read and understand. Paul is basically saying that to be executed and therefore be in the presence of Christ after death is the easiest solution to his predicament. However, the best option, is for him to sacrifice his life by continuing to live and serve Christ through his evangelism and writings. Paul's continuing ministry of participating in the story of Jesus was his sacrifice – a much harder path than being executed.

That response shows true faith.

Our gospel reading is the prayer Jesus offers for his disciples after the Last Supper. He prays that God will be in each person, so each person can act with justice and would believe in God, including the incarnate Jesus. In v 26 Jesus addresses God in his prayer, saying,

"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

I have often wondered if this is a chicken and egg situation, what came first. Personally I have decided it doesn't matter if the chicken or egg came first; that is, it could be that we act with justice because we are responding in love to God within us, and the Holy Spirit guides us in such ways, or it could be that someone who acts with justice may come to understand that God is moving within them, and the delight and love that comes from acting in this way opens up to them a relationship with God?

I actually think both are possible, and neither denies the presence of God within each one of us. For some it is not acknowledged and for some they actually refute the very notion of God, but still live their lives following the precepts of justice, loving kindness and righteousness.

This, reminds me of the passage from Matthew's gospel, chapter 25 verses 31 to 46, where some people referred to as 'sheep', have cared for hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner, and did not realise that they were in effect administering to God, because they were relieving the suffering of the 'least'.

I contend that we can get to know God here, in this church, in fellowship, in discussion, in prayer, in partaking of communion, in singing hymns of praise or awareness raising, maybe even (well maybe) through the preaching.

We can get to know God by being still, in any place and at any time, if our attitude is right. For everywhere is holy ground. What works for you may not work for someone else.

We can get to know God through our actions to help the least; actions of kindness, justice and righteousness.

So, over to you. How have you got to know God and how do you continue to know God? What place, space, or environment facilitates this? In what unexpected places have you met God, and in what guise?

To draw our conversation to a close, I will read Malcolm Guite's response to Psalm 46, from his book 'David's Crown: Sounding the Psalms'. You can see an interview with him about his book here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvG9T1q4pFY>

You can hear him reading the poem and read the text for yourself here:

<https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2020/09/17/god-is-our-hope-and-strength-a-response-to-psalm-46/>