

Call to Worship

We worship the God who inhabits our world
and indwells our lives.
We need not look up to find God,
we need only to look around:
 within ourselves,
 beyond ourselves,
 into the eyes of another.
We need not listen for a distant thunder to find God,
we need only listen to the music of life,
 the words of children,
 the questions of the curious,
 the rhythm of a heartbeat.
We worship the God who inhabits our world
and who indwells our lives.

Call to Worship

We gather as people on a journey.

**We believe & we have doubts,
we do good & we sin.
We are imperfect humans,
and still beloved by God.**

Love and grace. Hope and faith.
These are the essence of the one we call God.

**We seek forgiveness & grace from
the One and from those we've harmed.**

Assured of that grace,
we are ready to grow again.

**We yearn for a new way,
a new perspective,
and a clear path.**

Though we are full of trust
and full of doubt, we are here.

Speak to us, God!

Continue creating us!

Inspire our hearts.

Enlighten our minds.

Guide our actions. Amen.

The Jesus Question

Life is full of questions!!

I don't know about you---but every-day I am bombarded with questions.

Some I can answer---others not so much.

Yet, questions abound everywhere.

What am I going to do with my life?

What about climate change?

Will we ever get back to 'normal'?

What will tomorrow bring?

Not only do these practical question beg for an answer, but then there are the philosophical questions, which comes first----the chicken or the egg, or how many angels can fit on the head of a pin.

Or the one I liked in my philosophy class in college was," If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it fall, does it still make a noise?"

However, some questions are large and others are small.

Children are famous for asking questions such as... 'WHY.'

Try as you might to explain their questions.... I don't know about you but I sometimes reach the breaking point.

"Because I said so, that's why."

Some questions are essential and others are trivial.

There are those questions that are passing curiosities that we ponder once and never return to them ever again.

Or we might say: "There are no dumb questions---go ahead and ask away."

Questions play a key role in our spiritual journey as well!

What is God's desire for my life?

Am I saved?

When I die will I go to heaven?

Why does God allow such tragedy to exist on the earth?

Getting people to make recognition that God is on the move, day in and day out is always a challenge.

Every Sunday I would ask: "How has God been moving in your lives this past week?"

"Where have you recognized the presence of God at work?"

To which most people would look at their feet trying not to make eye contact so as not to be called upon.

But there are some questions that provide the themes of our lives. These particular enduring questions are at the core of everything that happens in us and through us and even around us.

And in many ways, the questions we ask of ourselves, of others and of society----define who we become!!

"How much of your life is invested in bringing about the Kingdom of God here on earth?"

Prayers, presence, gifts and services.....

We are 'needy' people---more so than we are willing to admit.

We do not have it all together!

There is one question that we will 'all' have to answer eventually.

There will be no getting around it...

It's called the Jesus question.

Matthew 16:13-20

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ **"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"**

Believe it or not there are some people who go looking for it, chasing it with the joyful abandonment of a child in a treasure hunt (looking for their Easter basket).

There are others of us who spend their whole lives avoiding the question.

Some people try to tiptoe quietly towards the question, worried that they will give the wrong answer yet wanting desperately to know the 'truth' for it will set them free.

And then there are others who stomp up to the question, lacking even an ounce of humility and reverence, "What gives Jesus?"

For some people the Jesus question unexpectedly jumps out at them---sort of being blindsided---they are in the middle of their daily duties and BOOM!

Some people discover the 'question' through a once-in-a-lifetime friendship of someone who introduces them to the Jesus they have always known about but never completely or fully understood who Jesus is.

For others, a tragedy drops the 'question' on the doorstep of their lives and now they begin to scramble.

Then the question of 'why' me---I am a good person etc. takes precedence, "what did I do to deserve this?"

Then some wise sage answers the question by telling you that "God doesn't give us more than we can handle."

Jeremiah 29:11 (MSG)

This is GOD's Word on the subject: I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.

Sometimes we fill our lives with noise and busyness to avoid the Jesus question, but when the noise finally dies down and the busyness subsides, the question is still there. It waits patiently to be pondered and answered.

I was listening to K-Love the other day and a woman was lamenting that she has never heard the voice of God speak to her.

She wondered was she not good enough, or maybe God didn't love her because of poor decisions in life----crying ensued....she desperately wanted to hear from God.

Here is the kicker.

There are some people who quote somebody else's answer to the 'Jesus question.'

But I have to tell you, if you already didn't know this, someone else's answer is profoundly insufficient.

We need our own answer to the 'Jesus question'!!

This is a deeply personal question that requires a deeply personal answer.

My answer to the 'Jesus question' is going to be different than your answer.

You can not hang on to the hem of my garment to find your answer....you must discover the answer to the 'Jesus question' for yourself.

I suspect that the way you and I deal with this particular question says much about who we are and what we value.

Then there are the biases and prejudices, and blind spots we carry with us as a result of a lifetime of past experiences.

Look where we are as a nation as a world---black lives matter, blue lives matter, pink lives matter, global pandemic (India) ...etc. "all lives matter!"

And, of course, there are the fears and ambitions that we so often allow to rule our lives. (I love watching these reality shows where the individual, says that they are going to win the big prize so their family can have a better life and that they will be proud of them.) But again this type of thinking can also become a way of avoiding the question all together.

“I got here by the sweat of my brow!”no acknowledgment that God was in it at all.

Oh well.

The question itself is like Jesus.

We can either agree with Him or disagree with Him.

Glorify Him or vilify Him.

Follow Him or reject Him.

About the only thing you cannot do when it comes to Jesus is ignore Him.

He is inescapable and unavoidable.

His fingerprints are everywhere.

He changed the world!

I have to be honest with you---try as you might, you cannot escape or hid from Jesus.

And to top that all off---He knows what you are thinking right now!!

Matthew 16:13-20

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ **“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”**

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

This is the Jesus question.

Who do YOU say that Jesus is?

Not who do your parents, teachers, spouse, pastor or friends say that Jesus is BUT who do you say He is?

This is the inescapable question about the unavoidable

Jesus!!! Am I saved? When I die will I go to heaven? Why does God allow such tragedy to exist on the earth?

The disciples had gathered around Jesus.

Then Jesus asked two 'questions'.

In our gospel lesson Jesus asks the disciples what they have heard about him.

Jesus is taking a survey or a Gallup Poll.

He hears the answers of the disciples, then He gets up close and personal as He asks the disciples, "But who do you say that I am?"

Then Peter, good old Peter, responds for the group of disciples by saying: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

In his answer, Peter was saying a whole lot about Jesus.

He was saying that he knew Jesus was more than John the Baptist, more than a prophet like Elijah, he knew Jesus was connected to God Himself.

So, Peter calls him Saviour, Lord, son of God.

Peter knew Jesus was unique, Peter knew Jesus was more than a man with dirty hair, a wrinkled face, dusty feet and soiled clothes, more because this man, who was at the same time God, had changed him.

Peter was coming to trust and believe in Jesus more and more.

Peter saw past the man and saw the divinity hidden in Jesus so he could cry out, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Remember Peter was and is no different than you or I.

Peter denied Jesus, cut off an ear.....
Tried to walk on water but lost focus....impetuous.

In the same way, do you and I see Christ in the kind deeds of others, do we see Christ in the words of comfort offered during trouble, do we see Christ in someone who we regard as less or not as good as we are??

Peter saw the divinity in the man Jesus and I wonder if we see and feel the divinity of Christ today??

We can miss seeing Jesus who is all around us and in each of us, because at times we get so caught in the exterior stuff of our faith that we cannot see the God that is beyond all of that stuff to the God who is active, living, and interested in our individual lives.

Sooner or later, we each have to proclaim for ourselves who we think Jesus is.

For some He rescues us from the miry clay, heals, restores, heals, feeds and quenches our thirst, salvation, loves me unconditionally, grants peace, even gives a 'wink' no and again...etc.

It is time to answer the question: "Who do you say I am?"

I believe that ALL the stuff in this world we are experiencing could be dramatically changed if we would simply answer the Jesus question.

TBTG.