

Trinity 20

As human beings, we are very much affected by our situation. What we do, what we see, what happens to us, what situation we are in, what we know. And our experiences shape and form us.

So, does that mean that as people we are 'our experiences'. That's us? That defines us?

Well not quite. It's probably true to say that what we don't experience and what we don't know also makes us what we are. Perhaps they are things we might not be interested in and have no experience in, and we feel none the worse for not being interested. We might for instance not be very interested sport or current affairs and that not being, makes us the person we are.

On the other hand, we might wish to experience something in our lives, know something in our lives, but we don't have that experience and the missing out on, in some way contributes to what we are. It could be all sorts of things. Perhaps we wanted to pursue a certain career and it didn't quite happen. For others, perhaps a better family life or better friendships wouldn't have gone amiss. Sadly for some, living in violent conflict and fear and not knowing peace and security, contributes to what they are, and we might think of the dreadful situation in the Israel/Palestine at this time.

The not happening and in this case wishing it had, affects people.

Likewise we might get a glimpse, a window into something we'd like more of and because that's all we get we hunger or thirst for it. I can think of an example of where I've liked a singer or a band, but their career has been cut short, perhaps it barely got going and that's it. There's no more. Or maybe sometime in our lives, we've been attracted to somebody, maybe thought there might be some possibility of something developing, or maybe not. But whatever, we are affected by it not happening. People are often affected by this on a short term basis, it's part of life. But for some it can be longer term.

So, we are just as much who we are by what we haven't known and haven't experienced, as what we have known and experienced. And what we haven't had or know just a little of, often wets our appetite, to know a bit more. To want a bit more.

I think our relationship or lack of relationship with God can fit into all of this. We here this morning, are who we are because of our relationship with God. Through our faith we come to know and experience God. But we are also the people we are because of what we don't know and don't experience with God. The things that are lacking in our relationship with God, make us the people we are. At the moment. But as we might lose out on earthly experience, there is always more experience to be had with God. If we want it.

In today's Old Testament reading from Exodus, we have Moses, a man who has a relationship with God. A close relationship it seems. And yet God is still a mystery to him. Moses is leading his people in the Exodus through the wilderness, but he wants to be reassured by God that God is with them. Moses wants the people to know that God is with him as their leader. It is after all, no easy feat, leading a nation out of captivity, through the wilderness towards the promised land.

God certainly 'knows' Moses, but Moses, despite his relationship with God, feels he doesn't know God so well. Moses says to God.

'You have said, " I know you by name, and you have also found favour in my sight.' Now If I have found favour in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favour in your sight."

So for Moses, there is much about God that is still mysterious to him. There is much about God that is unknown. At the moment, Moses is just as much the person that knows about God as the person who doesn't know God. But Moses is in a relationship with God, he has begun something that has wet his appetite, and he wants to know and experience more.

And does God ignore this plea. Does God ignore Moses' want? Well no he doesn't. Infact, God is about to provide a glimpse of himself to Moses, a window into something that is beyond Moses experience.

God says to him.

'I will make all my goodness pass before you and I will proclaim before you the name, "the Lord". But God says, "you cannot see my face".

So God will put Moses in the cleft of a rock and he will pass by Moses. But Moses will not see everything. He will not see God in all his fullness, because God will cover Moses with his hand until he has passed by. Only then will God take away his hand, so that Moses may see God's back, but not his face.

And when God unravels a little more of his mystery before Moses, Moses will be shaped and formed by what he sees, and by what he doesn't see.

God is as much about what we don't know of him, as what we know of him. As we are just as much the people we are by what we don't know of God as what we know of him.

It is however an ever changing situation. As God passes before Moses in all his veiled mystery, giving Moses just a glimpse as to what he is like. So God will reveal more of himself to us. We too have the potential to be favoured in God's sight, if we haven't been already in our baptism and faith. And we too can ask God to 'show us his ways". The more we seek, the more we know, until maybe one day we will be the people who we are because we have experienced God fully and know him in all his ways.

Amen.