

Sunday 17th September 2023

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

Readings Exodus - The people escape ([Watch the story here](#))
Matthew 18:21-35

Reflection

Our story from Exodus raises questions that are often uncomfortable. Why would God, as we understand God, choose to kill the Egyptians, there are other ways of concluding the story that tells of the Israelites escape that would not necessitate the death of the opposition. This story is part of that great story of freedom that runs through the story of the people of Israel and it is also a story that builds up the tradition of the Messiah, the one who will come and remove all that threatens or oppresses the people and in their minds the only way that can happen is through force and violence. It is a reminder that we still have a long way to journey in becoming fully human, as Jesus urged people to be.

Whenever two sides are in conflict there is the challenge of both side praying to God, and how we see God acting in that situation. I don't believe God does act in that way at all. For me, God is the positive energy of creation, God is love, and it is our actions that serve to neutralise the effect of that positive energy, actions which can cause hurt and harm. When we choose to live in love then we allow the positive energy to create peace. It is all about choice for we have freewill.

In the story from Matthew Jesus id asked, 'how often should we forgive someone?' Forgiveness is a choice but it is deeper and more complex than simply saying a few words. To answer the question Jesus tells a story about a King who chooses to cancel a debt, to forgive a debt and it is a debt of extraordinary proportions. The amount is such that it could never have been paid off by even the wealthiest person at the time. And that is the point of the story, it points to the magnanimous and amazing forgiveness of God, and answers the question with a simple 'every time'.

We have allowed ourselves to become sidetracked by the second half of the story, we judge the actions of the servant and cheer when he gets his comeuppance and then worse still we transfer those thoughts onto God. That is not the God of positive energy, that is not the God of unconditional love, it is the a god of conditions and contracts, a god made in the image of our half formed humanity. God is everywhere and everything, knows everything, why would God have need of anything? Therefore there is no need for contracts with humanity, there is simply a call to love, and to grow into the fullness of our humanity.

Jesus calls us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, to see ourselves as one with each other and one with God, inseparable within the positive energy of creation. Quantum science is revealing more and more about our humanity and one aspect of our instinctive repose to giving, we are made for giving, and giving makes us happy. For-giving is a part of that. If we are choosing to follow the way of Jesus then we are choosing to prioritise love, and love forgives. Loving our neighbour means forgiving, especially when we do not get what we expected. This requires a culture change, success is not measured in how much you get but in how much you give, how much you help others to receive. Love is about personal growth rather than personal profit.

As we evolve or grow in our humanity contracts will become irrelevant and reality will become a place of harmony where we live to love, love to give and forgive those who choose a different path. It is all about the choices we make and the important thing is to remember that we are one and always will be. In that oneness we are also a part of God, as is everyone and so to love God means to love everyone and to judge no one, for we would not imagine judging God. We are not to judge the choices others make, simply to judge our own choices. Does my choice enable my growth or diminish my experience of life? We make choices all the time and that question is important every time –

- Will I smoke this cigarette?
- Will I eat more than I need?
- Will I eat meat?
- Will I choose work or family?

- Will I choose to argue, to gossip, to tell the truth?
- Will I choose to challenge doctrine and dogma and explore new understandings?

Does my choice enable my growth or diminish my experience of life?

Our choices affect everything, community, politics, and war are all influenced by our choices. We affect the lives of others and we are called to prioritise love.

In her book 'Roots and Wings' Margaret Silf explores the challenge of choice. She suggests that the evolution of the human brain has led us a place where our brain demands we engage more in the choices we make, asking ourselves questions as we seek to make decisions.

- *In this situation, do I choose a course of action that favours and enhances life for all creation, or will I choose to take my own advantage from the situation, regardless of the effects on others?*
- *Which course of action (or which response or reaction) is likely to lead to a greater humanisation of myself and of all of us? Which choices tend to dehumanise myself or all of us?*
- *Which choices are coming from that part of my being that longs for transcendence – to go beyond our present stage of being human to something much greater – and which choices are coming from the defensive parts of me that sees the rest of creation as a threat to be conquered? What is really driving my choices in any particular situation?*

For all of us it comes down to the question do I choose to live primarily for myself alone or for the wider circle of humanity and the whole of creation? When we choose the latter then we are choosing to engage with a consciousness that is still largely beyond what we have known but a consciousness hinted at by Jesus in his gospel of love and his challenge to see ourselves as one.

I believe that God continually communicates with humanity. If we could hear God, what might God be saying?

- Every human being is as special as every other human being who has ever lived, lives now or ever will live and every human is a messenger of life in every moment.
- There are many paths to travel in the journey to God and no path is more direct than any other. There is no 'one true religion', not a special people or a greatest prophet.
- God requires nothing of humanity, God is everything and God is happiness.
- God is not a singular super being, living somewhere inside of the universe or outside of it, nor does God have the same emotional needs as humanity and subject to emotional turmoil. God cannot be hurt so God has no need of revenge or to impose punishment.
- All things are One thing and all things are part of the one thing
- There is no such thing as right and wrong, there is only what works and what does not work depending on what you seek to be or do.
- You are not your body. Who you are is limitless and without end.
- You cannot die and will not be condemned to eternal damnation.

Our understanding of God is subjective, influenced by what we have heard as children, what we have been told in church and our experiences of life. Our understanding of God needs to change and grow in response to our new awareness as humans. As we choose to live, love and grow in our humanity, to follow the call to become more fully human, we use the moments of our lives to demonstrate our choice through choosing the highest option and being the best we can be. Our lives do not have to be the way they are, the world does not have to be the way it is, we are capable of living together in peace for we are a part of God and God is love and love is peace. God invites us to make the moments of our lives and to love one another without prejudice, fear or hatred.