

Pastor Roy's sermon from July 5, 2015

Ezekiel 2:1-5; Psalm 123; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Mark 6:1-13;

Where to you look for God? Yes, it's important to learn about God from the Scriptures, others' knowledge and experience, but it's necessary to learn from God directly and commune with God. It's this direct relationship with God of which I speak. In this, do you look for God wait for God in the extraordinary, or the common? Do you think of God as far away? As very different from everything we experience day to day? Or immersed in everything we see and hear. The "com" in common and commune speaks of "with." In order to commune, we must be "with."

And so it is that the Christian faith is deeply incarnational. God in flesh. God *with* us. God in the common. God in the everyday. We commune with God every moment, even when we are unaware or feel that God is distant or absent. There is never true distance between us and God. Feels that way at times, but it's a feeling, not a reality. That ever presence is Grace. Presence means that today is the day of salvation. Today is the day we can walk with God. To be truly with God we must allow God to be God, rather than all the things we want and need God to be. Communion is as much about listening deeply as offering our presence to the other in speech or silence. Let's look at the example of Jesus' village.

The people of Jesus' village could not imagine that one of their very own might speak to them of God. That he could be a messenger of God's Word to them. And Jesus' home town would doubt all the more if that Word sounded a little different than what they had heard before. To the people of Nazareth, Jesus was very common. Yet Jesus was "God with us," Emmanuel, to Nazareth, but they missed that because he was so very common to them. Basically, "Who do you think you are, posing as a teacher, prophet?" They figured a teacher, prophet would be someone else, from somewhere else, with a different message. And they missed this message because they could not see God in their common life.

And it wasn't just Jesus who lives out "God with us." Jesus multiplies "God with us" by sending out his disciples 2 by 2 to say and do the very things he was and did. The people who received the ministries of the disciples would experience "God with us" as when Jesus preached and healed. This had truly become a movement of people teaching and healing in the name of "God with us." This movement was not about adoring and setting apart Jesus as special—no, God among us was also about the disciples learning to be a God presence to the people around *them*. "God with us" is also the disciples healing, loving, setting people free. Jesus is God with us in his actions and presence. He teaches his disciples to do likewise.

Jesus' ministry is not about Jesus, it's about God and living in justice, mercy, and love. Jesus invites his disciples to live as he lives, to love as he loves, to be compassionate as he is compassionate. As with Ezekiel, the message is an invitation to stop resisting God's grace. To open oneself to God's mercy. The message of the prophets and Jesus and the apostles is to live in communion with God's love—to experience "God with us." Not to solve all the problems or eradicate evil or judge with precision how everyone else should be living. No, there is freedom in Jesus' message. It's not our job to make sure everyone else is properly good the way we think they should be good. It's not our job to get them here on Sunday morning. In fact, you've undoubtedly learned that the harder we try, the less successful we often are.

Our job is, we are called to be "God with us" to our neighbors and friends and family. Who is God calling you to be with as "God with us." If they find common worship helpful, they will come because they will feel welcome—not because of what we say, but because of how we love. They will live compassionately, with justice and mercy because we have been the very presence of God to them. And often, they are a God presence to us. Let us celebrate that God is with us in so many ways, and people, and creatures. Thanks be to God. Amen.