

Easter 5 2026

May I speak with the love and grace of the living God. Amen.

Who is God? What is God like? How can we know God?

God, by definition is beyond what any one human being could ever fully grasp or understand. If God would fit in what our limited hearts and minds can understand, God would not be God. We are human and God is not. God is God, vast and deep, powerful and different beyond anything we can ever fully imagine. A theologian I have learned much from, called Karl Barth, once said, that God is not MAN writ large. God is utterly other from us; in ways we cannot fully understand.

So is there even a point in asking those questions about who God is, or what God is like?

Yes, absolutely. While I believe it is very important for us to bring a very healthy portion of humility with us, when we go on a journey to try and know God, asking these and other questions about God is a good thing and there is absolutely a point to it. Because God wants to be known by us, despite the reality that we will never be able to know and understand all of God.

God, knowing that for us to even begin to know and understand who God is, is more than our human brains can hold, became one of us. God became one of us human beings in the person of Jesus Christ. God became small enough for us to touch, to see and understand.

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

In our gospel reading today Philip gives voice to his longing to know God. Who is God? What is God like?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

God is like who we encounter in the person of Jesus Christ. Whoever sees Jesus, sees God. And unlike with the presence of God that is beyond our touch and beyond what we can see, Jesus as a human being was someone people could see and touch. People were able to encounter Jesus, have a meal with him, have a conversation and experience his healing touch in ways that are much more understandable within our human minds and hearts.

And because of that people had lots of memories of their time with Jesus throughout his life, death and resurrection. Memories that could be told as stories over and over again and were eventually written down in the four books we now call the gospels. These stories of Jesus are so important, because Jesus told his disciples that whoever had seen him, had seen God and after his death and resurrection, more and more people were convinced that that indeed is the truth of Jesus and God. That God became one of us in the person of Jesus Christ, so we might have a way of knowing God that is easier to understand within the limitations of our human hearts and minds.

It is a little bit like language translation. It is like being in a place where everyone around you speaks a language you do not speak or understand, but then someone offers you to translate what others say and what you might want to say and suddenly you are able to part of the conversation, able to get to know the others around you and for them to know you. Or like watching a movie in a language you don't know, but putting on subtitles you nonetheless can understand the story the movie tells. No translation is ever perfect. Each language has at least a few words that are so specific to that language, it is impossible to exactly translate them. There are shades of what is said, that will

never quite fully translate, because there is a whole culture, a wealth of history and a particular worldview shaped by them behind every language. But translation can bring us closer, can help us understand.

Jesus is God translated for us in a way that can help us understand who God is. There will remain things we cannot fully grasp or understand, but in knowing Jesus, we can know God. When we gather here week after week, we have a special focus on the stories of Jesus, because coming to know and understand God is a central reason for our gatherings. If you've been going to church for a while, you might have noticed that every Sunday we have two readings, one read over there from the eagle from different parts of the bible, and one from the four gospels, which will be carried into the congregation and all who are comfortable to do so are asked to stand and face towards the gospel book, as a sign of respect. Because the gospels tell us the stories of Jesus, translating God in a way that we can better understand. The reason we always have a gospel reading, is because Jesus is the translation of God into our human experience. And while all of the bible is important to us within the Christian faith, we read and understand the rest of the bible in the light of the person of Jesus Christ, whose life, death and resurrection are told to us through the gospels.

Knowing that Jesus is our human translation of God, I would like to invite you to reflect today and possibly throughout the coming week, who and how you understand God to be. What do the stories you know of Jesus tell you about who God is? What stories of Jesus might bring you great comfort, or challenge you? And maybe you even want to take a bit of time this coming week to simply read or listen to one of the gospels, while pondering the questions of who God is and what God is like.

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Amen.