

God is Father

Acts 15:7–21

Psalm 96:1–3, 10

John 15:9–11

(Thursday for 5th Week of Easter)

In the Old Testament the God of Israel is usually called the Lord/Jehovah or Yahweh. There are less than twenty instances where it is either implied or explicitly stated that he is Father. When the word Father is used in the Old Testament in relation to God it is primarily used metaphorically. Let me give the two key examples. In Proverbs 3:12 we are told:

***for the LORD reproves the one he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.***

The use of the word “as” compares the way God disciplines his children to how a loving father directs his son. Then in Psalm 103:13 we hear these words:

***As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.***

Now God is being compared with a compassionate father. Here is the point I am making. In the Old Testament the use of the term father is metaphorical and used very infrequently, less than 20 times.

In the Gospels Jesus always addresses God as Father, over 180 times. In the farewell discourses alone, found in John 13-16, from where we have been reading this week, Jesus refers to God as Father over 40 times in four chapters. There is a very significant change that occurs from the Old Testament to the New. Jesus, when referring to God as Father, is not speaking metaphorically, that is using father as a comparison. Rather he is speaking metaphysically. He is stating that the very essence of who the Creator God is in the core of his being is Father. My dogs Coconut and Yogi are metaphysically canines. You and I are metaphysically human beings.

God is in his very essence of course Trinitarian and Jesus wants us to understand that the one who had revealed himself as Yahweh and Jehovah in the Old Testament is in his very essence Father. That is why in the Lord’s Prayer we pray:

“Our Father who art in heaven”.

Notice this is in the present tense, “Our Father who is in heaven”, is another way to say this. Just as God revealed himself to Moses as *I am who I am*, the present tense of the verb “to be”, now Jesus takes this verb “to be” and applies it to the Fatherhood of God.

All of what I have said thus far can help us to then better hear what Jesus says in today's Gospel:

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.

Here Jesus is saying that the Father is love's only origin. The Father's love for the son was such that in the midst of all Jesus experienced in his human life, the love of the Father governed everything. It was this relationship that defined Jesus and not the intense hatred and opposition that he experienced on his way to Calvary. Jesus says that in the same way he loves us and invites us to abide in his love. It is this relationship that is to orientate and define who we are as we continue to live in the world where often we face great hardships and difficulties.

Jesus then goes on to tell us how to abide in his love:

¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

Here Jesus is saying to us that the Father is love's only origin and obedience is love's constant proof. At the heart of Jesus' command is to believe he is from the Father and to love one another as he has loved us.

As we abide in Jesus in this way he then promises:

¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

Joy is not the same thing as happiness. The word happiness has as its root "hap" which means "chance", "luck", or "fortune". Happiness is therefore contingent fortuitous circumstances. The word "joy" in Greek is the word "chara" and is related to the word for grace "charis" and is the heart of the word "Eucharist".

Joy, you see is rooted in the grace of God the Father. Those who abide in Jesus are not governed by happiness but by a deep-rooted joy that is the fruit of living obediently in relation to Jesus the Son who showed us who God truly is.

And here at the family meal, the Eucharist, we feed on the Love that gave himself for us, who showed us that God is the Father who invites us into a relationship of obedient love so that we can show forth the fruit of joy.

Remember therefore God the Father is love's ONLY origin; obedience is its CONSTANT proof; joy is its SURE fruit.