

Dear Friends,

This week I intend to write about God. You could well say “Don’t you always write about God?” to which I suppose the answer is “Yes and no”. In some ways God is not an easy subject. In one sense there’s a tremendous amount to say, but in another sense there isn’t much to say and it’s hard to know where to begin.

That’s because the first thing that has to be said about God is that He is a mystery. God is a mystery in the true sense of the word, that is something that lies beyond human understanding. God is a mystery in the sense that He is beyond what our words can describe. Recently I saw a cartoon about a man coming out of church. As he shook hands he said to the minister, “Your sermon reminded me of God”. The minister looked quite pleased and said, “Oh yes”. The man went on, “Yes, it was beyond our understanding”.

In one sense we can say a lot about God. There’s a tremendous amount that has been said about Him, there are vast numbers of books that have been written about God. In another sense there’s very little that we can say about God, there’s very little that we can say directly about God Himself. We can talk about our experience of God, we can talk about what we think about God, we can talk about people’s ideas about God, but we can’t say anything very definite about God Himself.

Everything we say about God is really an analogy. An analogy is when we say something is like something else as in “This tea is like dishwater”. We can say that God is like a shepherd, or He is like a father, or He is like a friend. When we say the 23rd psalm we don’t mean God is actually a shepherd, we don’t mean that He has His celestial crook in one hand and has His own team of sheep dogs. What we mean is that God is like a shepherd. Our experience of God teaches us that He is like a shepherd, our experience teaches us that He is like a father in his love for us.

In all that we say about God we need to bear in mind that element of mystery. However our human experience has taught us that there are some things we can say about what God is like. We can say that God is creative. He has revealed that creativity in the world He has made. God is the source of life. There have been endless arguments about how God has acted in creation. In the end all we can say is we don’t know, it’s part of the mystery of God. What does matter is our Christian conviction that ultimately all life comes from God.

We can also say that God is loving. He revealed that when He sent Jesus into the world. God has revealed himself supremely in Jesus. Jesus has been described as the human face of God. Most of what we know about God, we know through Jesus. You just can’t talk about God without talking about Jesus.

Best wishes,

Mark