

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

**If you want to know God, get to know Jesus - Pastor Hank French**

*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. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:8-9).*

The Gospel of John has often been referred to as "spiritual" gospel. Its purpose is not "biographical or historical, it is spiritual. The Gospel of John is designed to lead the reader into a deeper understanding of the very nature of God and thus into a deeper personal spirituality, into a deeper personal life of faith, into a deeper personal relationship with God.

Matthew, Mark and Luke, on the other hand, tend more toward the historical. They are often referred to as a creative combination of "history remembered, and history imagined." In other words, they reflect the memories of what Jesus said and did that were passed down in the so-called "oral tradition," that is, by word of mouth, beginning with those who knew Jesus.

When the gospels were written (Mark about 70, Matthew and Luke in the 90's) history remembered became their foundation and history imagined allowed the writers to imagine what Jesus might have said and done if he had been alive in their time facing the issues that confronted their churches.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all agree that Jesus' purpose for being born into the world was "to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). His purpose was to bring salvation to sinful humanity by taking upon himself the sin of the world, as well as the penalty for sin, through his death on the cross, thereby securing divine forgiveness and forbearance for sinful humanity.

Not so for John. For John, Jesus came into the world to reveal the truth about who and how God is; he is the self-disclosure of God. At the beginning of his Gospel, John writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.... And the Word became flesh and lived among us John" (John 1:1-5, 14).

At the end of his Gospel, Jesus tells Pilate, the Roman governor, "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37). And in the middle of his Gospel, Jesus declares: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." And what is the truth about God that Jesus disclosed? That God is love and God calls each of us to love as the fulfillment of our humanity.

I encourage all of you to read the four gospels again, notice the differences between Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each time you read through the four gospels, you will know more about Jesus and thus you will know more about God and will find yourself being drawn deeper into the reality and mystery of God.

Prayer: Holy God, show yourself to me by opening me to all that Jesus said and did. Amen.