

Scripture: John 13:31-35; 1 John 4:7-12

Sermon Title: "Have You Seen God Lately?"

Rev. Josh Fitterling

Have you seen God lately? Now, I know that this may seem like a bit of an absurd question. After all, in our second reading this morning from the first letter of John, we hear that "no one has ever seen God." This is a sentiment that is echoed throughout the New Testament in different ways. These same words - "no one has ever seen God" appear at the very beginning of the Gospel of John. We can find some similar understandings in Paul's writings. And while it may seem that some of the Old Testament stories, a few of the experiences captured in the Hebrew Scriptures may say otherwise, God has never been seen. God's essence, yes! God's presence in different ways, sure! But seeing God's self in full glory - no. Still, I ask the question today, "have you seen God lately?" Because we do get to see God's essence, God's presence, God's spirit all throughout this life, if we are open to acknowledging it. In fact, if we really open our eyes and our hearts, we are likely to see God around us in more ways than we know.

Throughout this week, preparing for today, I was especially mindful and open to seeing all the ways in which God is made manifest in our world. It is rather amazing quite frankly, to see all the ways when we just take a minute and look! For instance, I saw God this week at the Post Office, on a sidewalk down in Brunswick, and even out on the front steps of the church this very morning just to name a few! Let me share a little more. On Wednesday afternoon, I stopped at the Post Office to check the mail for the church. In the box was one of those yellow slips that you get when there is a package waiting for you at the desk but it is too big to fit in the box. When I saw it, I was curious. I didn't think we had ordered anything lately that would be coming in a big box. So I pulled out the slip and saw a post-it note attached to it, which essentially said "we have some more food at the desk. Can you take it to the pantry?" This of course was referring to the "Stamp out Hunger" food drive which the US Postal Service does every second

Saturday in May to benefit local food pantries. So I went to the counter and handed them the yellow slip and they handed me a mail crate full of non-perishable items, which I believe had come in since the drive on Saturday, which has now been delivered to the St. Philip's Food Pantry. And in the clerk who handed the food to me and in the gifts of food in that crate, I saw God. A God who loves and feeds the hungry.

On Friday, Mason and I was down at the Midcoast Hospital Auxiliary Grand and Glorious Yard Sale, held in the Merrymeeting Plaza in Brunswick. And as we were going from one spot to the next, walking on the sidewalk, I saw God again! Walking ahead of us was an older man with a cane. He saw a piece of litter on the ground. Shaking slightly as he bent forward, leaning on his cane for support, slowly stooping down, he picked up that piece of discarded trash. In that gentleman and his act of care for creation, I saw God. A God who loves the earth and all that is within it.

And I mentioned about seeing God this very morning on the front steps of the church. When I was walking up the hill, I caught a glimpse of our flock out front and I took a moment and stood on the front steps, looking at the flock and out into the town we serve. I was reminded of all the joy that these sheep brought to our community last year. For the ways in which they celebrated with those who were celebrating and brought smiles into the lives of people who were facing hard times. Looking out over the flock reminded me of the excited question I was asked a month ago by a community member down at Sarah's Café, "when are the flockings starting again? I want to schedule mine soon!" In those corrugated signboard sheep, I again saw God. A God who, we remember ever Sunday, celebrates with us and sees us through the challenging times. A God who may be found in the strangest of places. A God who pops up in our lives in wonderful ways when we may least expect it.

In our second reading today, we hear some of the most beautiful words right after we are reminded that no one has ever seen God - words that I love to revisit rather regularly in my own spiritual journey. We are told that, "if we love one another, God lives in us, and God's love is perfected in us." When we see acts of love in our world,

we get a glimpse of God. We get to experience the essence of God working through and living in the lives of others who are sharing love. And the three examples I shared from this week are just scratching the surface when I think about it. For God was also witnessed in many other kind words and acts. God was seen in the work for justice taking place in our world. God was seen over meals, in the breaking of bread which is one of the places where we certainly know we can encounter God. God was even found, believe it or not, on the internet! Certainly not everywhere online, but when you see support for other, when you see community being formed, when you read stories of good news and stories of folks standing up for righteousness in our world, there God can be seen too.

Still, we should not only ask where we have seen God in such acts of love, but also ask “how have we shown God lately?” After all, today we hear again that new commandment of Jesus to love one another. And if we are loving one another, we are showing God to the world. As we continue to journey through Eastertide, still cherishing the joys of Easter morning, there is no better time than this season to be reminded of this calling in the world. To show love as Jesus did. To shine the love of Easter morning in what we do. To share the resurrected Christ and the blessings of our God through our actions of love. And so, in the midst of looking for God in our everyday, may we too be mindful of how we can show God to others as well.

Beloved People of God, we talk about love a lot. And there is a good reason for that. As it says in our reading today, “God is love”. Love is the essence of God. Through love we experience God. Through love we know God. And through love we show God. This is the commandment. That we love one another. By this we live our faith. By this we will be known as Christ’s disciples. By this we will allow God to live in us and we will, in turn, live in God. So this week, look for God. And this week, show God to someone else. So be it and may it be so. Amen.