

6th Sunday after Easter

Acts 17: 22-31 and John 14: 15-21

Vera Ezumah

You would probably agree and say that we are all on a journey. You and I, are “travelers”, “passers-by” crossing the space of life. And usually, our journey is eventful. At times we may experience great calm and serenity but sometimes, there can be a lot of movement in our lives. Movement around us, in our external circumstances, (brought by conflicts, violence, crises or wars). And at times, the movement can even be in us, in our inner being. Whether in a calm or agitated state, questions may arise within us. Questions about meaning, identity, purpose or destiny. Who are we (really) ? Who do we belong to? What are we here for? What is meaningful or important for us? And what are the limits of our horizon, of our being? These questions often lead to questions about God; his existence, his identity. These are questions that many of us have. And it’s the same questions the Athenians of the first century were debating. Indeed, even if apparently without a sense of urgency, the Athenians, are wondering.

The Apostle Paul is eager to help them. As a privileged witness to the truths of God, he wants to help them tear the veil, as it were, and discover what they do not seem able to perceive on their own. So, how can we give shape and substance to the empty space which, in the mind of some, represents God? What are God’s features? What does God look like?

Our readings today point to a few identity features that should be highlighted in a portrait of God. Greatness is one of them. In relation to God, there is undoubtedly, something about **greatness**. Paul reminds us that God is the one who initiated life. He is a powerful creator who has given birth to a huge project. He has commanded, structured, given coherence, and he has fixed time and space to everything. God has created and set a limit to every finite thing. But he stands beyond. He is beyond the limits, beyond the easily accessible, the directly visible. And through time he remains unchanged. One of his unchanging desires is for us to desire to reach out to him. He wants us to seek him, —and find him. If we do, if we seek him, besides greatness what we are likely to discover is **proximity**.

God is not distant from any of us. *“in him we live and move and have our beings”* Jesus says. This means that it is in Him that the pillars of our lives (life, movement and being) are rooted, and defined. And in fact, despite the otherness of God, despite the difference between who he is and who we are; He is eternal, all-powerful, and invisible, we are temporary, fragile beings with physical bodies. Yet, there is a connection and a possible closeness between him and us.

One of the wonders of God’s creation, is that he has conceived a space for a possible encounter between humans and their source of life. God is relational, he values relationships. But, God stands —beyond. Beyond the obvious, beyond the ordinary, beyond what is expected or known. And God’s desire is for us to be bold enough to seek him, —and find him. And this, takes a journey. A journey with different stages. In this journey, we may have to tear down some veils or silence deafening noises if we do not want to remain at a distance, far from the one who (from beyond) calls us, gives us a name and a purpose.

If we are to find him and discover the name we were given, we will have to make way, push aside things that may have a semblance of importance or urgency, but which ultimately blur our vision, and distort our sense of identity. Things like earthly pleasures, material possessions, a career, fame, authority and power, or the desire to make a name for oneself. Most of these things are not necessarily bad in themselves, but they do not allow what is most precious in us; our spirit, to grow and flourish. So, if we get caught up in them, they end up distorting or reducing us. They reduce

our potential, our present and our future. God wants us to seek and find him, but the pursuit of things will lead us to lose our way, and to lose ourselves. (And who can prosper when they are lost?)

We are creatures, passersby, going through the space of life. And God knows us. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed that God has a plan for us to prosper us and not to harm us, a plan to give us hope and a future. (*Jeremiah 29:11*)

Jesus also reminds us that in the Father's house, there is room for us. From the beginning, from our very beginning, God has made room for us, —near him, in his presence. And now, God is waiting. He is patiently, lovingly waiting for us. He is available and ready to meet us. For a first or umpteenth encounter, God is always ready to welcome us. So, greatness, proximity, a desire for relationship and availability, here are some of the realities that should be mentioned when we speak of God. Two or three other things could be added.

When it comes to God, there is also a strong dimension of **mystery**. The Mystery of communion. A few verses before the beginning of our passage in John, Jesus says : "*I am in the Father, and the Father is in me*". That's the picture of a perfect unity, a perfect Communion. This communion is also shared with the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of Truth that Jesus wants us to receive, to carry and walk with.

Out of love, the Father has sent the Son. Out of love, the Son has obeyed and then, out of love, the Son sends the Spirit —to us. When it comes to God, love is foundational. Love is the (sweet) cement of unity of our triune God, and the seal of his identity. It is because of love that we are called to greater and invited to join the Father and the Son. Yes, love does an extraordinary thing. Love extends God's space of communion to let us in. Indeed, Jesus says : "*I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you* ". *That's a wonder, and a mystery!* But God invites us, he wants us to join and live the mystery, he wants us to experience it from within.

So yes, God's desire is for us to seek him. And with his Spirit of truth, he equips us to find him. The question is are we going to? Will we answer him and be a part of his plan? Be a part of him? The development of God's plan could be summed up with one word : Kingdom. So really, the question we need to ask today is, do we want to know the kingdom? do we want to open the doors of the Kingdom, and live in it? The answer for Antonia, Daisy and Sterling, who will be baptized today, seems to be yes.

Indeed, baptism can be a tangible way of answering God's call, of pushing open the door to God's kingdom and gaining access to his presence and resources. But we know that being a citizen of the kingdom and maintaining that citizenship is an ongoing process.

So I have a question for us all today; those who are about to be baptized, those who have already been baptized, and those who have not yet been baptized:

The question is are we ready? Today, are we willing to know God or to know him better? Are we willing to look at God's face, —day, after day? And are we ready for the unexpected? I hope that the answer is yes. God has so much to offer. And I believe he does not want us to miss out on the things he has prepared in advance for us.

So, to conclude, I just want to pray. I pray that the Holy Spirit, would help us increase our ability to seek and find God. So that we can be shaped by greatness, enter mystery, be filled and sent by love. Sent in many places where the kingdom needs to be —on earth as in heaven. —In Jesus's name. Amen.