



Week One: God

Welcome

Nametags please

Go ahead and look at Matthew 21:33-43

Sunday's Gospel: Matthew 21: 33-43

The wicked servant's parable

- 1 Who do each of the characters represent in the story?
- 2 What is this story saying about Jesus and His mission?
- 3 What is the lesson He is trying to convey to them? How does it encourage us to act?
- 4 How will this story lead us into a deeper relationship with God?

Why do you think Jesus quoted the Psalm in the Old Testament Scriptures?

Why use parables to teach?

How is Jesus challenging me?

Prayer

Ps 139

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

RECAP

- Sign up info sheets due this evening.
 - How did FORMED go? Symbolon?
 - How did reading the book go?
 - Re-recommend a journal/ notebook.
- Please bring a bible each time- needed one tonight.

Tonight

- 1 Creeds/Symbols
- 2 God of experience
 - 3 God of reason
- 4 God of revelation (OT)
- 5 God of revelation (NT)

(You will need your bibles)

1. Creed

- Creed comes from the Latin word *Credo*
 - *It means "I believe"*
- *Creeds were known as Symbols or "symbolons"*

The Rule of Faith

- Creeds summarized the rule of faith:
- Rule here means “measure”
- Creeds contained a quick summary or “measure” of the faith.
- Most common used today: Apostles and Nicæan Creeds
- Nicæa and Constantinople were general church councils
- Councils are named after their location, some of them produced creeds to clarify a misunderstanding

Nicaean Creed

- Nicaean creed uses a Father, Son, Holy Spirit structure
- We believe in ONE GOD
- The Father
- The Son
- The Holy Spirit

Tonight let's look at this One God

- Who is three divine Persons!

What and Who is God?

- So the big question: What is God?
- Or Who is God?
- In order to explore this we will progressively look at what we can know on our own, and then turn to what has been shared with us.
- We are going to ascend in knowledge
- From what we can know to what God tells us

A. God of experience

- Let's look at common human experience:
- God is reflected in His creation
- In our consciences
- In our religious impulses
- In the need/drive to understand the supernatural

Various religions show us this is universal:

- But...
- This impulse can go wrong: some common mis-directions
- Polytheism
- Pantheism
- Dualism

- But in general paganism is acting on a common need and awareness all humans have.

B. God of reason

- Aristotle and Plato in their own way, using reason, began to think more clearly about God
- They concluded that God exists.
- Plato: **the One**, a totally spiritual being separate from creation
- Aristotle: **the Uncaused Cause**, a totally unique being not in the cosmos, not made by anything else

Proofs for God's existence

- These used observable reality
- Asks where and how they exist and continue to exist
- IE. How can we explain logically what we see around us?

The Five Ways

- St Thomas Aquinas gathered the five more persuasive ones into what is now known the 5 Ways
- They attempt to answer just using our minds, in there a thing we can call “God”
- And they begin to help us define the term.

Peter Kreeft's summary:

- 1 Where there is a design there is a designer
- 2 The principle of sufficient reason suggests that to account for everything that is, there had to have been something that is not made, but who made it.

So Who Made God?

- That's the point of these proofs
- To account for reality as we see it, there had to be something UNMADE in the first place
- Something not in the links of causality; like a train engine, that is pulling everything else, but is pulled by anything else.

Conclusions for reason...

- So what does our reason tell us about “God”?
- 1. outside time, unchanging and eternal
- 2. not IN the universe: God is infinite. Not a THING in the world
- 3. God made everything: omnipotent

Thus...

Cont...

- God is not even the most powerful thing IN the universe
- Rather God makes the universe and holds it all in existence
- God is something altogether different than anything we can imagine
- In order to move beyond this, God needs to TELL US.

C God of the OT

- Exodus 3:13-14
- Moses is asking God what is His name, what's His handle...

What's your Handle God?

- Moses is asking “what’s your handle?”
- God does not give him a handle: Instead, he cryptically describes himself: I am who I am.
- This later became **Yahweh**; tetragrammaton.

Ex 3

- What does this name tell us?
- God is not the old dude in the sky
- God is not one being among many
- God is. God is life itself.
- God exists in Himself, not through the power of another
- God does not change, He is

- Cont.....

Ex 3

- God is transcendent, not A thing in the world but above all things that exist.
- God is not the biggest and most powerful thing in the world. He is not IN the world at all as we are. He made whatever is the biggest and most powerful thing in the world and holds it in existence.
- As a revelation, this is more certain than the logical musings of Aristotle and Plato.

Ps 139:1-6 and 13-14

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. (v 1-6).....

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. (v 13-14)

Ps 139 tells us...

- God is not just transcendent but interpersonal

God is one: The Shema

Deut 6: 4-6

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.

The Shema

- This was a major MORAL challenge to the Israeli people:
- why? Everyone around them had turned to the pagan problem of polytheism.
- And we see this monotheism promoted and defended by the prophets when Israel keeps going after foreign gods.

D The New Testament: The Trinity

- John 1:1
- WORD here is **Logos** in Greek
- Not a sound like we think of it; but the thought or truth that comes from God's mind
- We learn very quickly that this word is a HE, a person
- A divine person who became flesh and lived among us

John 10

- Read John 10: 22-30
- Explicitly what does Jesus claim?
- The reaction of the crowd? V. 31 pick up stones.

Matthew 28: The Great Commission

- As Jesus got ready to ascend, he taught them to make disciples and
- **“Baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”**

Post-Biblical Times

The first 7 ecumenical councils Nicaea to 2nd Nicaea all struggled with this.

Ex. Arius wanted to put Jesus in the “created” category. He was God, but not GOD.

His famous quote is “there was a time when the 2nd person of the Trinity was not.”

St Athanasius of Alexandria got exiled 5-6 times over this one, trying to defend the Church’s full understanding that Jesus was totally God.

So if it is confusing, don’t worry, we are all in there with you.

So what does this teach us? The Church adopts a language of person and nature to explain this loving relationship with the God-head.

Simply Put

- God is one nature
 - Nature= WHAT a thing is
- That nature is completely shared in three persons
 - Person = WHO you are
- So it is one IN three, not 1=3.
- Rather God is one divine God, fully shared and completely in three completely unique WHOS, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- **It is still a mystery, but not a mathematical one.**

Analogy to help us

- Jesus came down to share himself as the Image of God
- He knew we use things we know to understanding better things we don't
- Analogies are only analogies, they fall short--- but they help a bit
- Old man with beard? Pros and cons
- 3 leaf clover? Pros and cons

3 Our response in faith

- The mysteries of faith, shared through God's revealing love can be known, but never fully known.
- We know other persons as friends in 2 ways:
 - A) Actual interpersonal Friendship
 - B) Or we can reflect philosophically on the nature of friendship
- The first is better
- The second helps us know how to be better friends

Discussion Questions

- What have been your images of God? As a child/teenager/adult?
- God wants a personal relationship with us. He wants to share His love with us. How does this change how we approach and know God?
- God is a loving relationship in Himself. And we are made in God's image and likeness. How does that help us think differently about our own relationships?
- God can be known personally. God is not an "IT" but three persons in One God. He knows and can be known.
- Discuss any questions/ideas/quotes from the reading that you wish to bring up on this topic.

Next Week

- Please watch the next Symbolon on revelation
- Sri ch 2
- Optional in depth Dei Verbum from the 2nd Vatican Council
- Continue to pray daily. Recommend Our Father (Matt 5)
- Please do not leave without turning in/filling out sign up forms