



## PICTURING GOD

### *...WHO HAS SEEN THE FACE OF GOD...*

Recently one morning as I sat at my table on the patio, I was thinking about what God looks like, or what I thought he might look like. So when my friend asked me whether I was able to picture God the very next day as we kicked back and forth across the pool, I was astonished. I'd been wondering the very same thing.

We both admitted that we could not seem to picture him. After years of daily writing in my prayer journal, I feel quite close and comfortable with him. I feel his presence, I just can't quite see him. It's like having a dream and talking or interacting with someone and you know quite well who it is, you just don't see them.

At this point, I feel as if we are pen pals (remember those?) and that someday when we finally meet, he will look extremely familiar, even though I've never met him in person till that moment. I will take one look at his face and think, *but of course! You are exactly as you should be.* For example, when I worked as a sales rep I had a client who I'd only talked on the phone with for months till we finally met. And then he said, "You look exactly like you sound". I remember thinking, *How does someone look like they sound?*, but I get it. It's their familiarity, their vibe, their sensibilities, the way they speak and express themselves that provides some kind of image.

Of course, I expect that he will look completely familiar to me, but I also expect to be completely surprised. If our ways are not his ways and our thoughts are not his thoughts, how can we really think that he won't surprise us in some awe-inspiring, mind-blowing, spin-my-world-around-and-permanently-rearrange-my-brain kind of way? I

In the meantime, I keep thinking of how I picture God. I know it's not like the ubiquitous picture I grew up with hanging on walls everywhere with Jesus in flowing white robes, brown wavy hair, kind eyes, and that Mona Lisa smile on his face, his hands spread out in welcome. In some of those pictures he was carrying a cute little lamb.

I also doubt he really looks like he does as painted in the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo's God and Man, touching fingers in the sky, although that is a majestic image. And, to tell you the truth, the science-fiction images inspired by the book of Revelations does not do anything for me. Can't relate at all.

I can picture him looking as a Jewish man would have looked back in the days he walked here on earth but I can't really relate to that image of him either. Somehow, I think he looks different now. Before death, and then after death. That death had to have changed him.

The Native American Indians see God in nature and in everything and everyone around them. If we are all sparks from the divine fire, then God must look a little bit like everyone, all the peoples and tribes of the earth. We are made in his image. Every one of us. How interesting God must look. And then I thought of all the animals he created, the incredible diversity of them and thought, *when I see the playfulness and agility of a cat, the magnificence of a whale, or the intricate beauty of a peacock, am I seeing an aspect of God? What about that Mockingbird out my window announcing the arrival of a new day? Is that God singing to me?*

I think when it comes down to it, we all picture God in the way in which we can most relate to – in the way we can imagine. Or we picture him according to our expectations and experiences. Maybe we picture him colored by what we most need in our lives at the time.

Our pictures of God are incomplete, because he is unlike any other. And we have never seen him. We have incomplete information. What does a majestic, kind, holy, loving, all-knowing, all-seeing, forgiving, all-powerful God look like to you?

Maybe some do see him as described in the book of Revelations, shining brilliantly as gemstones, his head and hair as white as snow, eyes flaming like fire, feet like polished bronze, his voice thundering like ocean waves or sounding as a mighty trumpet blast; or some see a kind, fiercely protective, outdoorsy shepherd, or a long-haired hippie dude with a bandana tied around his head and fist raised up for justice – a rebel and a renegade.

For me, as long as I still inhabit my small corner of the earth, I would like to remind myself to see God in the "other" – the person who is not the same color or ethnicity as myself – the person whose culture and life circumstances are completely different than mine; the person who doesn't travel in the same circles as I do, whose sensibilities and world view, their take on life, differ from my own – or whose political views are polar opposites of mine. I would like to see him in the foreigner and the immigrant, because I too am just a foreigner here myself.

What does God look like to you?

Can you picture him - do you see pieces of him all around you?

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