

Most of you know that my Mom passed over this past May...
and we did what all families do, we begin to tell stories:
Do you remember when....?
Didn't it make you mad when she....
Wasn't it funny when she....
and...like most families, we all had different memories!
Oh sure, most of the time we agreed on the big details:
like it was a Christmas morning memory, or it was summer...
but so often, my memory was different than my sister's or my brother's...
so the question then became: which one was true?

Well, they all were! Each memory was true for each of us...
We tend to remember what is important for us...
The older I get, the more I'm learning to hold my 'version' of the story lightly
and to ask others how they remember the event
and to remind myself that they too, remember what is important for them...

Such is the case of our Gospel reading today.
John's Gospel was the last Gospel to be written around the year 100,
a full 70 years after Jesus' death.

It is so different from the other 3 gospels
that Scholars don't put it in the same category as the other 3....

Mathew, Mark and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels,
because they tend to tell the story Jesus' life from a common starting point.
Yes, they each have their own agenda's and view points,
but both Matthew and Luke
used Mark as their base and then added and subtracted as each writer seemed fit.

But John....John is in a league all by himself!

Mathew, Mark and Luke all look at Jesus as more human...Jesus suffers and weeps he gets mad, he has friends...Jesus is born in a particular place and at a particular time.

He is baptized and grows up...and he is killed.

The Jesus of Matthew, Mark and Luke is much more like us...

John, on the other hand sees Jesus as totally Divine!

In John, Jesus sees all and knows all.

he is always in control, even during the worse of times,

he is never caught off guard...

John offers what scholars call a very 'high' understanding of Jesus.

John's Gospel begins with "In the beginning..." and he means the beginning of the Cosmos, not the beginning of the life of Jesus.

Read the first paragraph of John, and you will immediately know that we are speaking metaphorically and poetically....

Each Gospel remembers Jesus differently...

sometimes they even contradict each other!

So whose memory, which Gospel is the truest one...

they all 'right', they are all true..., but for different reasons.

So...does John's Jesus offer us, in our 21st century interconnected, interdependent world any hope or insight?

One of the teachings that was hard for some of the disciples that was not included in today's reading had to do with Jesus telling the disciples that he had come down from heaven and the disciples said... "aw, come on...isn't he Joseph's son? Mary's son?"

Of course, as John tells the story, the disciples take Jesus literally... big mistake as we all know!

Jesus wasn't trying to tell the disciples his life story...
he was trying to invite them into, what we would call, a shift in consciousness,
He wanted them to accept a totally new identity,
a radically new understanding of what it meant to be a human person
made in God's image and likeness.

Jesus knew that Yahweh, his Abba, Daddy God
was not a disconnected king, ruler and judge far, far away from his people,
but a loving Father,
a searching housewife,
a light on a mountaintop,
a peace beyond understanding,
a mercy that crossed all boundaries,
a compassion that reached beyond the rules and regulation
an all encompassing Love
that was so far beyond our ordinary tit for tat way of loving....

Jesus knew and taught that to accept these teachings
we would all need a shift, a change a growth in consciousness...
not just become better at keeping the law....

Unfortunately, that was asking a lot of humanity both back then and now!
So often, most of us use our faith as a tool for teaching good behavior.
We use the 10 commandments to keep our kids and ourselves in line.
Now, that is not terrible, that's a good thing
Rules of conduct are necessary for a healthy and safe society...

but that wasn't what Jesus was into...he wanted people how to know God
differently AND (very importantly) themselves differently.

Jesus wasn't just into people being 'good'

He wanted people to know themselves as lovable and loved, not sinful and pathetic.

He wanted to bring new life: physical, emotional and spiritual...

He wanted people to deeply know how wondrous they already were....

He wanted people to realize that the Kingdom of God was already inside of them...

right there, right now...and by simply knowing that

they would help him create the Reign of Heaven on Earth...

He wanted people to know what Teilhard de Chardin said in the 20th century:

"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience.

We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

We are capable of so much more than we think possible:

not to build ourselves up, not to make us rich and famous,

but to bring more love and more kindness into the world....

Remember how often Jesus was talking about service and compassion and

forgiveness...

Remember how he would get so mad at his thick headed disciples when they argued

about who would sit at his left and his right: positions of power...

Remember how he taught that the meek would inherit the Earth and the last shall

be first

and how he got down on his knees and washed his disciples feet...

It doesn't matter which Gospel memory we find ourselves attracted to...

It doesn't matter whether we see Jesus as more human or more Divine

what matters is that we allow our self understanding to be shaped by his teachings...

what matters is that we see ourselves as both human and divine

what matters is that we understand and participate in humble service, joyful giving

and glorious loving....

**What matters is that we retell the stories as we remember them,
the details that give us hope and life so that our children and grandchildren
will know themselves in this way too...**

**and if we can do that, all shall be well....and we will know the Peace that the world
cannot give, we will experience Joy beyond the circumstances of our lives and we
will understand that the only response necessary is: THANK YOU. Amen**