

Life preservers and flares...
Delivered at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church and Neighborhood House
The Fifth Sunday of Easter
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How would you Email God?

Recently even Dell has gotten an Email address. So I figured for sure, if Del had one – God had one, too.

What would God's Email address be?

[Pause. Congregation.]

Maybe more interesting would be the conversation...and

The Reply!

Annie Dillard [on the front cover of the bulletin] suggests that there might be reason to run for the hills:

"On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of the conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake some day and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return." (Teaching a Stone to Talk)

The author of today's Unison Prayer, Aaron Zeitlin, suggest that it doesn't matter whether you praise or curse God in your Emails or sing out God's graces or revile God. Either way, God will know you love God. Based on what Zeitlin says, what you most need to be concerned with is:

...if you sit fenced off in your apathy, says God,
If you sit entrenched in, "I don't give a hang," says God,
If you look at the stars and yawn,
If you see suffering and don't cry out,
If you don't praise and don't revile,
Then I created you in vain, says God.

(in Siddur Hadash)

Well, Annie and Aaron are not God's spokesperson's but they do make us think. What is the relationship we are to have with God, what does it mean, what does it call us to do, and what of being here in worship?

Michael Lindvall, who is the Senior Pastor at The Brick Presbyterian Church, says the following about worship in his book, The Geography of God:

Worship that does not make you anxious once and again
Worship that fails to stretch your mind and spirit to the edge of discomfort
Is something other than worship.

A little later on, Michael says,

"If you and I enter worship facing anywhere but toward God, the experience may please us, it may inform us, it may comfort us, but it will hardly *transform us*."

Transformation, emerging...a NEW JERUSALEM.

There are so many books written about the transforming and emerging churches in the modern, post-modern, information age...

It's almost like we are trying to get somewhere. If we just get the right formula: Done! Finito! Time to sit back.

Truth is we are not going to be emerged or transformed until we **are** stunned to one degree or another. Stunned into a moment of clarity and a psychic and spiritual change that is often referred to as the **Aha! Moment**. However, even that pales in describing what John of Patmos gives us in his visions.

Think of Picasso, Chagal, deKooning Van Gogh...think of Picasso's *Guernica*, of Chagall's *American Windows*, de Kooning's *Spoletto*, or Van Gogh's *The Starry Night*...

Visions of art, music, sound, cosmos, eschatological forbodance – all wrapped up in one series of dreams...

All emerging through the discomfort and unease of a Babylon and beast to the NEW JERUSALEM – now on Earth.

"The focus is now on Earth, since this heavenly city has descended to Earth. It is no longer necessary to raise one's eyes to the sky to see God. Yes, to see a manifestation of God as in all creation, but God is now on Earth.

Where? Look around. This should make us a little uneasy...

And the emergence of God the touch of God is not in the temple – note: no temple has descended. Jesus is the temple. No building required.

Hold on, because the ride has changed. The rise and risk of transformation is happening...just as it has been from the day that out of his grace, not sacrifice, but out of his grace and fulfillment Jesus didn't give up his life – he gave it away.

What are we giving away in this NEW JERUSALEM? Please keep your donations coming for our mission, because we need depend on it...but for a moment put the money aside. What are you giving away of you as worship in this place and presence of God?

Last night, I worked the desk. As I sat there, getting ready for today and directing folk to wherever they needed to go, a woman came in who could not get down the few steps into the foyer but not up the steps to the meeting she wished to go.

Another woman who was on her way to the meeting stopped to help her. Sat down, took out her meeting book, helped her find a more accessible meeting, asked her again if she would like to get some help to make it up the steps, and when the woman declined...the person helping her walked her outside, keeping her company as she went off to another meeting.

The person who helped the other gave away: her plans, her movement, her momentum, her thoughts of the moment to help another who needed some help. I cannot be convinced of that as being anything other than worship.

Recently, I was reading about Solomon's Temple and his decline. The author spoke of how later in life, Solomon continued to acknowledge God as beyond human comprehension, but for Solomon and those who followed him, God because too identified with a place, made of human hands, a dynasty, and ultimately a city of oppression and injustice."

Revelation. God is. God cannot be kept. Look around. Find worship, be worship.

John's Gospel this morning goes further. Find the seek the relationship that Jesus had with God and enter into it as a disciple. Forget about perfection. Jesus acknowledged that betrayal was no reason for expulsion. Judas was not the only one who betrayed Jesus. While most dramatic, perhaps, so did Peter and so did all those who were not at the cross. And, still, the relationship between Jesus and God understood.

Sing out My graces, says God.
Raise your fist against Me and revile, says God,
Sing out graces or revile,
Reviling is also a kind of praise, says God.

Love one another as I have loved you...

Praise Me, says God, and I will know that you love me.
Curse Me, says God, and I will know that you love me.
Praise Me or Curse Me.
And I will know that you love me.

Love one another as I have loved you...

Email that to others...and hold on for the ride!