

Lent Devotional April 3, 2023

Scripture

Psalm 119:73-80

*73 Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.*

*74 Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.*

*75 I know, O LORD, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.*

*76 Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your servant.*

*77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.*

*78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.*

*79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.*

*80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
so that I may not be put to shame.*

Devotion

The Rev. Kori Robbins '22

In college, a mentor of mine always said, “Show me your friends, and I’ll show you your future.” When he said this—to the middle schoolers at the summer camp he helped organize, to the high schoolers desperately trying to fit in, or to the college students that worked as camp counselors—it was always in reference as to how the world, and people, around us shape who we are ourselves. Human beings are shaped by many things: our upbringing, our education and social settings, our economic and political standing. We are shaped by the events of our lives: the exhilarating adventurous parts, and the mundane, everyday ordinary stuff.

In these specific verses from Psalm 119, we are reminded of all the ways in which we are also shaped by God. In my first year of seminary, Dr. Ron Tappy taught “Introduction to the Old Testament,” and one of the most poignant images that he talked about that sticks with me is that of an “anthropomorphic God.” Dr. Tappy talked of Genesis, and of the dust that formed humans, the type of dust that comes out when you hit the ground hard and a little puff of dust rises up. And he talked of God walking about the garden, acting as gardener, shaping and loving God’s creation.

Now, this image has always stuck in my head a bit, because I like the idea of an anthropomorphic God. I like the idea of God walking around and interacting with God’s creation, a la Morgan Freeman style. I like the idea of God having hands and feet and a face, just like you and me. I like the idea of a God that can shape things with their hands, forming each one of us from the dust of dust.

While I doubt the psalmist was thinking of an anthropomorphic God, I do think that the psalmist is asking to be shaped by God, to be shaped by God's words and actions. To be shaped by God's love and mercy, so that the psalmist can then in turn share God's love with others. God created humans for relationship, with love, and we are called to manifest our participation in the image of God through that same love. God so loved the world, so cared for the beings made in God's own image, that God made the ultimate declaration of love in sending Jesus to be our Savior.

Prayer

Holy God, Loving God: we give thanks and praise for the way your hands shaped and made us. We give thanks for the words you've given to us, shaped like paint on a canvas, slowly creating an image that reflects you. As we continue to move through the Lenten season and beyond, we ask for wisdom, reflecting on the beauty of us made in the image of you, and the ability to share your vivid love throughout the world. Amen.