

**Sermon: Big Table, Bigger God World Wide Communion Sunday October 6, 2019  
Rev. Steve Clifton - Rideau Park United Church, Ottawa, On**

Four blind men went out to see an elephant. The first fell against the animal's side and thought: "an elephant is much like a wall." The second grasped the tusk and thought an elephant is like a spear. The third got hold of the trunk and thought: "this beast is like a snake." The fourth reached out and touched a knee and said: "this elephant is like a tree." But of course the elephant was none of these things. It was bigger and more wonderful than each of them alone could know.

This old story is told in many traditions, (Hindu, Sufi, Jain, Buddhist and Christian)...And in our tradition it is often told as a way to reflect on our thinking about God. There is more to God than we limited creatures can understand. We each have ideas and experiences that give us an insight or two. But God is bigger, always more than we can know.

One of the greatest thinkers of history, the philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas, wrote that we never really talk about God. We can only ever say what God is not. God is completely beyond us. God the Scripture says is *Holy* – which means set apart, completely different in a remarkable way.

Radical theologians like Peter Rollins suggest provocatively that God does not even exist... rather God transcends existence...God is that which allows for and creates and undergirds existence. Just as light isn't just something we see but it's something that allows us to see, so God does not merely exist but God is that in which all else exists.

In the Jewish tradition the name of God is not spoken- no word can contain the Almighty. In the Jewish tradition, no image of God may be made- because no image can possibly capture the Holiness of God

Put another way: God is big. Way bigger than we are. A recent tweet from playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda reminds us of the limitations of our own point of view

*G`morning*

*from the colors in the spectrum your eyes can't see,*

*The frequencies your ears can't detect...*

*The invisible struggles inside everyone you pass,*

*There is so much more going on*

*than is visible*

*iceberg tips,*

*all of us*

*Proceed with humility*

In the Christian tradition we do have Jesus. To understand or comprehend God we can look to Jesus. The Articles of Faith of our denomination remind us: *Unto us Jesus has revealed God, by His word and Spirit, making known the perfect will of God We believe that in Him God comes face to face with human beings...*

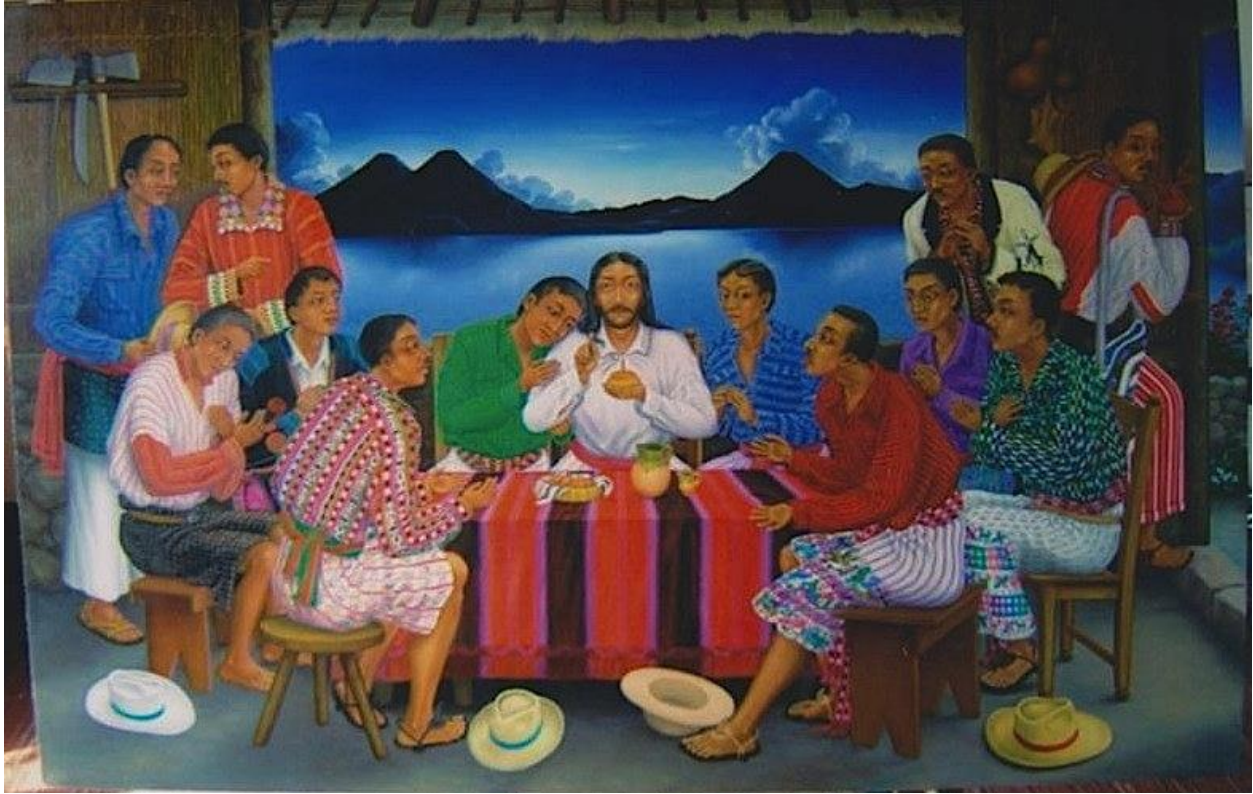
So who needs an image to represent the Holy One when we have Christ? But then don't we make our Saviour into something familiar, shape him into a comfortable likeness; our Jewish 1<sup>st</sup> Century Messiah with his radical ideas and challenging call might soon become a blonde haired blue eyed Swede who calls us to be "nice."

Today we celebrate World Wide Communion. We are reminded today of all the different traditions, cultures, languages, experiences and world views that are part of the Church in our world. And what a gift that is...We share a communion table today with people on every continent - and in each place they have their own way of gathering, praying and worshipping, a distinctive view of God, and a unique view of Jesus.

Being part of a global community of faith may help us to recognize that God, that Jesus, is bigger, greater than how we see may them from our limited vantage point. We may want to set a certain view of faith and the church in stone – but then our sisters and brothers in other places show us that it's all bigger, much bigger than the way we see it from here...

As we prepare to come to the Lords table with a global community today, I invite you to take a moment to view some images of our Saviour and of our gathering at Christ's Table as seen from the vantage point of our fellow Christians in other places... and may their point of view take us beyond our idols and open us up to something wonderfully more...

















Mag higugma-anay kamo subong nga Ako nag higugma sa







