## Colossians 1:15-29 (New International Version)

##  15He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

##  21Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1:15-29#fen-NIV-29471a)] your evil behavior. 22But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

##  24Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. 27To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

##  28We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

**Luke 10:38-42 (New International Version)**

 **38**As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. **39**She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. **40**But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

 **41**"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, **42**but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

 “The Image of the Invisible God”

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Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

* The mystical does not mean the unreal.
* Maybe what we are lacking sometimes is a taste of the mystical; the nonphysical.
* When we become too much like Martha, or chastise ourselves for not working enough we might want to rethink our criticism.
* How much time do we spend sitting at Jesus’ feet?
* What are we doing to open our hearts to Jesus?

What can I do to help you? Maybe the very best thing we or anyone can do is pray? Sure, we know this, but what do we do with the rest of our time to make sure that we are connected to God?

Thomas Merton in *The Seven Story Mountain*—dying to his old self . . . What a process. What a journey that began inside him, and gradually made its way out. He reveals a great deal about what it means to live in the world without being of the world. He tells a story that begins very certainly *in* it. He also repeats very simply some of the greatest truths of our faith. Meditating through Advent, he writes in familiar language from our creeds, but then adds what we do well to remember about our relationship with God. I believe it also can help us to understand the good news that Paul conveys in today’s lesson. It ties us into the way in which God, the invisible, is also very present on this Earth. “The Child born on earth, in lowliness, in the crib, before the shepherds, is born this day in heaven in glory; in magnificence, in majesty: and the day in which H is born is eternity. He is born forever; All-Power, All-Wisdom, begotten before the day-star; He is the beginning and the end, everlastingly born of the Father, the Infinite God . . .”

We may think that this is all well and good, and maybe this kind of language about God is what makes us think that God is not only infinite, but also invisible. What Merton goes on to say, though, reminds us of the great miracle and gift of God’s *incarnation*, and the way it continues to this day; the image of the invisible God. “He it is also that is born each instant in our hearts; for this unending birth, this everlasting beginning, without end, this everlasting, perfect newness of God begotten of Himself, issuing from Himself without leaving Himself or altering His one-ness, this is the life that is in us. But see: He is suddenly born again, also on this altar, upon that cloth and corporal as white as snow beneath the burning lights, and raised up above us in the hush of the consecration!”

When we worship together, and when we celebrate Jesus’ gifts to us in the sacrament of Communion to which Merton refers, God is with us. How, though, do we allow God to be born in us each moment during the day, if we are always so busy that, like Martha, we forget the greater thing? No, we aren’t meant to enter a monastery. We are meant to have a relationship with God that extends beyond the WORK of the church, and even beyond our worship. What do we do to connect to God? How do we know the invisible God, who loved us so much that he took on our form in Jesus, who is our Christ?

In talking about the blueberry festival and about other busy activities here, including getting the kitchen readied for use again by the wider community, I hear excitement and I also hear a lot of our stress and our worries. By mentioning these truths in the context of this morning’s scripture lessons, I don’t mean to suggest that our labors here at the church are either empty or are our only distraction. Certainly, there is much that we do that is necessary to live out Jesus’ command that we love one another. It is sometimes true that in remembering to be like Mary, we can’t forget to be like the Good Samaritan. Fred Craddock suggests that if we were to ask God whether we are to be like one or the other, the response would be, “yes.” How much do we do, though, with our work and our recreation that not only distracts us from our relationship with God, but even puts up walls between us? How much are we feeding our spiritual selves, our eternal selves, as we are feeding our bodies and our neighbors?

Jesus was the evidence of things not seen. And we may sometimes think that we can’t see Jesus now. And Jesus told us where to find him, but sometimes we make ourselves too busy to see or to hear him. We may well find Jesus in the other, but we might not take time to find Jesus in our own self. In relationship with God, we have God in us. What a gift, and yet we don’t often believe it, or too often, too completely, don’t know how to find this truth.

James Hamilton tells a story that might guide us well to opening a door for a new relationship with God. Somehow, growing up, I learned to call the refrigerator an “icebox,” a term that made my friends laugh and which certainly came from my mother via her mother. This outdated term recalls the time that Hamilton writes about when people also had ice *houses* to preserve their food. I’ll close this morning by sharing a part of this story. “Ice houses had thick walls, no windows, and a tightly fitted door. In winter, when streams and lakes were frozen, large blocks of ice were cut, hauled to the ice houses, and covered with sawdust.  Often the ice would last well into the summer.  One man lost a valuable watch while working in an ice house.  He searched diligently for it, carefully raking through the sawdust, but didn't find it.  His fellow workers also looked, but their efforts, too, proved futile.  A small boy who heard about the fruitless search slipped into the ice house during the noon hour and soon emerged with the watch. Amazed, the men asked him how he found it. "I closed the door," the boy replied, "lay down in the sawdust, and kept very still.  Soon I heard the watch ticking." Often the question is not whether God is speaking, but whether we are still enough, and quiet enough, to hear.”

Let us pray: “God give us a pure heart that we may see thee, a humble heart that we may hear thee, a heart of love that we may serve thee, a heart of faith that we may live thee.” Amen.