

October 18, 2026

Sermon – God’s Love viewed by a Mystic (This leads to bridge building and peace)

Scriptures

Psalms 139:13-16

- ¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

Mark 12:28-31

- ²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”
²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’^[a] ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’^[b] ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[c] There is no commandment greater than these.”

Romans 5:8

- ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

(Do not include in bulletin.)

I Corinthians 3:12-15

If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

When does God get to know us? When does God start to love us? How much does God Love us? When does God stop loving us? (Spoiler: From my pitiful, limited, understanding God does NOT stop loving us.)

My mother had adult-onset type one Myotonic Muscular Dystrophy. The etiology of this is known – it is a dominant inherited characteristic. So, if either parent has it, there is a 50% chance any child will receive it. The matters are a bit more complex than that as the mutation on the damaged gene gets progressively more damaged going from one generation to the next. So, there are four levels of this: latent (you don't know it is there), adult onset (in my mother's family that would typically manifest by about age 30, it can be very debilitating), juvenile onset (it will manifest a lot sooner and is a lot more debilitating), or congenital – this manifests right off and is profoundly debilitating. Being the next generation if I had received this it would likely have been one of the more severe forms, and I would no longer be around to speak of it. The 50% risk is a bit problematic; of the members of my mother's family that I knew it seemed the odds were worse than that.

Parts of Psalm 139 are read to say that God is interested in us from the moment of conception. Verse 15 is very poetic and suggests we are an open book to God before conception. Given my family history, I want to believe that applies to me.

There are other issues in both my mother's and my father's families that may well be genetic. So, I was possibly a real genetic bomb from BEFORE conception. I suspect someone prayed for me before I was born; and probably from well before I was conceived. This may well have been my father's mother. I want to believe that God intervened at a very early point sorting genes, chromosomes, and ultimately gametes to avoid some of the problems. At least the one that would have outright killed me was avoided.

My contention is that the way God had to sort the genetic materials he had access to resulted in me being transgender. Now, in conservative "Christian" circles that statement is an abomination. Their only contention is that being transgender is a sinful, depraved, choice. There is compelling statistical evidence that there is at least some genetic component in being transgender. As of now, there is no simple in-utero test that can confirm with 50% certainty that the child to be born is going to be transgender. I, for one, am glad of that because if there was such a test my fear is that those who are most vocal about being transgender being a choice would take a positive result on such a test as cause for an abortion – even though they oppose abortion.

I was not a wanted child. In many ways I was at best neglected and not so much tolerated. The defense mechanism that evolved in lieu of me having any sort of advocate was developing a complex Internal Family System. One of the myriad parts is a non-verbal one, who I have called Lee, that through my early years lived in terror of rejection and abandonment. This is not a part that identifies as even having a gender. I have enough very early (very bad) memories to prove they were not paranoid. At a family gathering when I was small my father offered to give me to another family member who had several children. How was that man supposed to react – there is no good way. Being young and not too bright I tried to turn to my mother for solace. Bad

mistake... My father's grandfather and my father's aunt were left to pick up the pieces of me. Trauma?? At an early age.

What would have happened if at an early stage I came up said "I am a girl" is too horrible to consider. In those years it would have been referred to psychiatry and lobotomy was seen as valid treatment. Those were the "good" old days Christian Nationalists want to bring back

I do not have memories of what happened at an early age to break me into so many parts; or even how early that age was. Looking at this there IS one female part that is irrepressibly feminine; and she is hardheaded enough to say the quiet part out loud. This is the one I still call Girlie Girl and she is every bit as incorrigible as I am trying to imply here. When I experienced childhood trauma, Girlie Girl was put somewhere she could do no harm. Language fails me to characterize this, so I turn to medieval French for a word to sort of catch the meaning. This term is oubliette from the verb oublier and means literally the forgetter. It is worse than it sounds and landing there Girlie Girl was utterly despondent and despaired of continuing to exist.

At this point the Father of the Fatherless acted. His thought process was "Sometimes when you want the job done right you have to do it yourself." So, the Father of the Fatherless came to Girlie Girl and said, "Can I be your friend?" He took her reply as "Yes!" This is God I am speaking of, and he can understand groanings too deep to be heard. Girlie Girl was too young to remember this event; the testimony is from her friend – The Father of the Fatherless. Girlie Girl spent as much time as she could with her friend. This is the short route to becoming a mystic. Being so little Girlie Girl was and still is able to go places with God that are inaccessible. What matters most to her about this unprecedented access is absorbing the unconditional love and acceptance found in the intimate presence of God. Being where she was, she was not able to reach out and make trouble. The only contact she had with the rest of me was through the good offices of her friend. In about 2013 there was a war among the parts of me and Girlie Girl was broken out of her prison, she has been more active since. But she prefers to spend her time with her friend, so I call her my inner Mystic.

Now I come to how some Christians look at transgender people. They come up with what they regard as a solid theological basis to exclude and minimize us. A common approach is to view the entire interaction between God and mankind as a story told in four chapters. One example of this is seen in this little book published by The Good Book Company: "A Talking Points Book by Vaughan Roberts, Transgender." The chapters in the basic story are Creation, the Fall, Redemption, and Glorification. This book has a full chapter for each of these and not much else for the topics related to transgender. In these stories the important part is Creation, that is the first thing discussed in the Scripture, so it clearly is the most important. The verse that matters is Genesis 2:31 "God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good." There are those who will say what was described up through Genesis 2:30 represents the full intention of God in creation – in other words he was looking for perfection. Now this includes all kinds of fish of the sea, birds, and animals that creep on the land. Frogs go on land AND water; this does NOT appear to include frogs. This also does not include transgender people (like me.) This does form a perfect basis for a Gospel of Exclusion.

For these ideas to fully work one must assume God was blindsided and fully caught off guard by the adversary. (Note IRONY.) Next one must assume God came up with Redemption as a hastily constructed Plan B to save at least a few of his biscuits from the overheated oven. So, God got virtually nothing he wanted from his effort at creation and had to settle for a few damaged pieces. This may not sound ideal, but it provides a perfect basis to say that transgender people (like me) are, in their very nature, a product of the Fall. If one takes Calvinist Theology, and twists it just right, this will fit.

There was a noted Calvinist preacher a few years ago named Jonathan Edwards, and he gave a famous (now classic) sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” The most noted line from that sermon is: “The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked.” This would appear to run directly contrary to the verse I called your attention to: Romans 5:8. I am going to agree with Scripture. As the sermon neared its conclusion the idea of grace was included and (at the time) this was seen as a very effective sermon.

Later, as Edwards reflected on the great time of revival, he was disturbed by one issue that kept repeating. After the fires of revival had cooled down and people returned to normal life, he kept getting reports of people attached to the revivals self-deleting. He did not say how many people this was, but the number did bother him to the extent he noted this in his later writings. My thought about this is that the picture he painted of God was more than people could live with. I do not ascribe to that picture of God, and have a completely different picture of God.

The Mystic in me has a different idea of God’s intentions in Creation, and the very nature of God. This four chapter story of God’s interactions with mankind does not reflect the God I know, love, and serve. To my inner mystic the biggest part of the story is the one that had the highest personal cost to God the Father; the death of Jesus. This brings us right back to Romans 5:8. Another way to look is to see that the overwhelming preponderance of Scripture is about redemption. I do not pretend to know the fullness of God’s intention in creation; but my inner Mystic does know how important love is to God and sees that one part of God’s intention was to create a situation where sentient beings, created in God’s image, could freely choose to love him. Hence the greatest command listed in Mark 12:30 is to love the Lord. Now the Mystic in me needs to make the point that God is not looking for a few souls to choose to love him, God is looking for as many as possible. God has infinite capacity to love, and he wants as many to return his love as he can arrange. God will take whatever steps are required to reach that objective, after all he already sent Jesus to die for us so we can approach him. Any other step, however seemingly large to us, would be as nothing compared to that.

This leaves scope for us to engage in truly artistic bridge building. My first idea was to dip deeply into the love of God and hope we could find a way to include people who refer to God using masculine pronouns. I know, God is spirit and those who wish to worship God must do so in spirit and in truth. Some traditionalists know that but still cling to using masculine pronouns to characterize God. I frequently slip and do that – and despite that fact I want to still fit in.

My plans... God had OTHER plans. God asked me to speak about building bridges between the Evangelical Church and the Transgender Community and look for some form of peace. From

what I have said so far you may (reasonably) conclude that I see an unbridgeable gulf between the two. What I see and what God sees are not exactly the same thing. God points out that I, hypocrite that I am, am working with Posture Shift Ministries which is an Evangelical Christian ministry. This is a ministry that is unabashedly not affirming, and they have doubled down on that position in the comparatively recent past. This from the same me who preaches until I am blue in face of the importance of affirming LGBTQ+ people in the church, and the even greater importance of affirmation for Transgender people.

Hypocrite – doubled and baptized in prune juice. Not only in for a penny but in for a pound as well. I was one of their supporters who suggested that they needed to make peace with their critics who slammed them for seeming too affirming. Guilty... The thing about a Mystic is that we look at a picture others do not see. The point in conforming to the outward demands of critics was to allow the ministry to get their foot in doors of churches that otherwise would not listen to their message. A core part of their message is making church a safe place for LGBTQ+ youth. A key aspect of making church safe is to reduce or eliminate the aspects of church that have caused LGBTQ+ youth to desire to self-delete. Given some of the theology involved that is a tall order and requires a LOT of nuances.

You might wonder why I care about such a ministry. In 2016 a Transgender student at Penn State self-deleted. Some of the commentary was that their faith community had rejected them. I was part of that faith community, knew their family, and was grappling with being transgender at the time. Pastor Ben knew this person and also keenly felt the loss. I brought my pain up with my church leadership and was less than fully satisfied; to gain better understanding they set me up with Posture Shift Ministries and I attended a two-day event near Boston in 2017. What Bill Henson (the founder of the ministry) had to say in person, to a crowded room, made a LOT more sense than what I found in my church at the time. I have been a supporter since.

So, my ulterior motive in being such a hypocrite is the preservation of human life. For that goal I will work with people that I may not fully see eye to eye with. My belief is that being Transgender is in good part genetic and the link is so complex it appears almost random. An outcome of that is families that are part of very “conservative” churches have LGBTQ+ children. Traditionally such children were pointedly not safe in church. Yes, a LOT were driven to self-delete. Acceptance goes a long way to help that; affirmation goes a lot further.

At one point the statistic was loosely thrown around that 40% of transgender people had tried to self-delete. Later, more detailed research showed that number to be inaccurate – the real number was 41%. More recent statistics show that up to 60% of transgender youth think about self-deletion in any given year. There is need to work to give them hope. I am working with Posture Shift Ministries because they go into the churches where without their effort there would be the least hope. Ok, I own being a hypocrite.

The other group of Transgender people that I worry about are the 50% of the full group (one out of EVERY two) that started out in some sort of Christian tradition and were driven out by other Christians when they were seen to be different. I bring this problem up to God. His answer is that they did NOT reject him (there I go again...) Gods’s representatives rejected them. God

draws me to I Corinthians 3:12-15 – if anyone has the foundation of the Gospel they will be saved in the end even if it as one escaping through the flames.

My one final word is INCLUSION. I have said this before!

Inclusive bridge building requires us to stand in the gap with radical, unconditional love, choosing conversation and safety over exclusion. Every life is precious to God – known even before conception - and when we practice belonging and affirmation, we create spaces where wounded souls can meet God (despite the missteps of the church!).

May we commit to building bridges of hope, so that all of God's children - without exception - know they truly belong.