

The Dude Abides

As hard as it is to do, we must let go of all the images of God that make us afraid, that make us quake with fear deep down inside of us. For the desire of God, the desire of the God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, is not a desire for power, or control. It's not a desire for penal justice and moral righteousness. It's not a desire even for worship, however right and beautiful we make it. And we certainly worship well here! Simply put, it's a desire for you. *God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.* This is the old, old story that the world simply can't believe to be true. That God loves us...truly loves us...and would go to any lengths to be close to us, to be intimate with us, to nurture us as we keep evolving into the best versions of ourselves. As the writer of 1 John says, *God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.* Not to prove divine might, or divine power, or the ability to control the ebb and flow of the universe. God's fullness rushed into the flesh of Jesus Christ so that we might have **life** through him. Life, for us, a people who still struggle to rise above our animal instincts. **Life!**

But more than just having life in some generic sense, the mysterious wonder-working of God has done something else. *God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.* You see, in our efforts to know God, we are looking in the wrong direction if we look from afar at some distant point and believe God is out there. That there exists some gulf between us and God. That there are places we can go where God is not, or that there are things we can do that drive us from God's presence. And this is all because God has chosen to make

God's home within us. Bidden or unbidden, said Erasmus, God is present. Wanted or unwanted. Invited or uninvited. Pushed away or cheerfully welcomed. And this doesn't just mean within the wide, open spaces of the world. It also means within the hollow places of our hearts. For God abides within us. Within the tiniest cells of our bodies, all the way to the thoughts and creativity of our minds...God lives there. Let that sink in for a moment. God no longer exists separate from the human race. God abides within us, and we abide within God...a beautiful circle of mutual affection and love. God, the God of all creation, who once may have seemed cold and wholly other, has chosen to rest and dwell within us. This doesn't guarantee that we will move through life and never feel spiritual distress, or anxiety, or powerlessness. That's just part of being human, of being alive. But the unbelievably profound and beautiful truth is that even when we feel distant, even when we feel broken, even when we feel so unworthy of the goodness and grace of God...God abides within us.

For reasons that you and I may never understand, God chose to enter into a relationship of mutuality and interdependence with us...a relationship that looks less like creatures groveling before their creator, and more like lovers intertwined in the most rapturous and sensual bonds of intimacy. The anxiety that comes from believing that we are unworthy of the love of God, or the inner struggle that mounts within us as we confront feelings of religious guilt for not praying enough, not laboring enough, not believing rightly or not giving enough...at the end of the day, such thoughts and feelings are built upon a foundation of lies. *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* Rest easy, my friends, my fellow lovers of God. Embrace the gift that keeps on giving, the grace of the God who abides within us, even at our darkest. See in your face, and in the face of your neighbor, the very face of God. Not far off. But here, right here. Within you and me.