

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.*

*4And you know the way to the place where I am going.” 5Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” 6Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” 8Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” 9Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.*

*12Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. 13I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.*

A bush was ablaze and but was not being consumed by the fire. The leaves did not turn brown and shrivel and smolder and burst into flame but stayed green even as they were aglow with fire. A shepherd named Moses came closer to see - there he encountered God. And when he asked God’s name this is what God said, “I am who I am.” Or this name could also mean, “I will be what I will be.” All that this name tells us about God is that God is free.

For God there is no “have to” or “must” or even “should”. God can make the rules or break the rules. God is “I am what I am.” “I will be what I will be.”

Have you noticed how making commitments can limit freedom? Volunteer to serve on a committee and the next thing you know you are not able to watch the big game because you have to be at a committee meeting. Get married and now you have to decide with someone else where to go on vacation. Take a job and five days a week the alarm needs to be set. To be free seems so much easier than to plan or decide or make a commitment.

So God could have taken the easy path – make no commitment to any human beings – just sit back and watch and judge and take it easy. But God chose to enter human life in Jesus. The Word that is God became flesh and lived among us.

Why give up freedom to have to put up with stubborn and arguing and demanding and complaining humans? Maybe because God wanted to be known by humans. Jesus said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.”

The one whose name is “I will be what I will be” has chosen to be revealed in Jesus. At the beginning of this gospel we read, “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son who is close to the Father’s heart who has made him known.”

Today Olivia Ruth will be baptized not in the name that means, “I am what I am” but in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The God who is truly God chooses to be known in her through the story of Jesus. All the love that God the Father has for God the Son now is hers. The place in the Father’s house that Jesus went to prepare through his dying and rising is promised to her. All the forgiveness that Jesus has won will be hers forever.

All of this is true for you. On the day you were baptized God promised that you would belong to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever. God promised to be your God. God could have remained free, waited to see how you turned out before God decided about you. God could have waited to see whether you were going to be loving enough, courageous enough, faithful enough to deserve life with Jesus. God could have waited to see if you were going to believe enough to merit life that is eternal. But for so many of us when we had nothing to offer God except our existence God chose to unite us with Christ. God chose to give up the freedom to turn God’s back on you, chose to give up the freedom to disown you, chose to let you know right from the start that you belong to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

What does God hope for us? That Jesus will be the way, the truth and the life for us. Not some ideas about Jesus that we say we believe, but Jesus himself. In him we know God and through him we are known by God.

Well, how is it turning out? Are you trusting in God, following Jesus, loving those he calls you to love? Are you serving the little ones in this world that are close to the heart of God, those who are poor, those who are harassed like sheep without a shepherd, those who were born unlucky?

It is a funny thing about the commitments we make – we are changed by them. Marriage, becoming a parent, joining a church, volunteering to serve on a committee, being there for a next door neighbor - each of them costs us freedom and sometimes it seems an awfully great price to pay. But at the end of the day the commitments we make and keep make us into the people we are.

Do you think that the same might be true with God? That the God who is named, “I will be what I will be” is changed by the commitment that God has made to you? Is God continuing to learn the joys and the costs of loving?

Are you? Amen. .