

*Phillip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied." Jesus 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."*

A glass of blue water, full to the top. Now I will pour more in. How long must I pour, how much must I put in until all of the glass is full only of the clear water? And what if even as I add the clear water, I pour in more blue water constantly? Will I ever have a pure, clear glass of water?

How would you tell a person who never saw red or blue or green about colors? If that person could only see black and white, shades of grey, how could you communicate chartreuse, or magenta?

Or how would you tell a person who could only see two dimensions about a third? They tell my cat can't see the depth that I see on the TV. A flat surface with shifting colors, the cat's mind does not allow it to see people and mice and dogs on that screen. For one who saw everything as a cat does on a TV, how could you explain another dimension?

We have a word, god. We believe that word represents a being beyond all words. God is a being far beyond all of our senses, all of our knowledge, far beyond every limit that we in our humanness encounter. How could God explain God to us? - we who are like cats looking at a TV screen, like persons blind to all color looking at a rainbow.

Jesus gave us a word, a name for God - Father.

But as Jesus spoke the name he used the word Abba - Daddy.

Dada. Mama. The first words an infant speaks, the first beings we know in life.

Mama, Dada.

If we begin life as an empty glass, before long the glass is full - colored by a whole host of experiences with Mama - Dada.

Maybe the color is gentle, soft, warm, peace filled.

Maybe the color is tense, anxious, uncertain.

Maybe the color is loud, careless, rough, angry.

Maybe the color is all three of these and many more depending on the moment.

But day by day the glass is filled. The water colored.

Into this very glass Jesus pours the being we call God - into the glass with the title Father.

I asked, "What do you think of when you think of God as Father?"

One responded, "First I must forgive God for being Father. For to me Father means tough, critical, judgmental - Father is the one I know I can never please."

Another says, "I thank God for being Father. Always there to help, wise, understanding me, accepting me, loving me.

How much water will need to be poured into these glasses until the glass is full of clear liquid, full of God?

I believe in God the Father almighty we confess.

Martin Luther explained this in the catechism in this way:

“God has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers. God provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work and all I need from day to day. God also protects me in time of danger and guards me from every evil.”

Providing, protecting, this is Father - God the Father.

I believe in God the Father Almighty.

There is a picture on the last cover of the Lutheran magazine. Maybe you have noticed it - a starving Somalin child – a child without food and clothing - no daily work, nothing of what the child needs from day to day.

I stare at that picture on the cover of the Lutheran magazine. I ask, what if that was my son? Somewhere there is a father who hears the cry from that mouth, whose heart is torn because he cannot provide.

I believe in God the Father almighty.

Can God be Father for that starving child also?

Father. The more I think about all of this the more confused I am. Why does Jesus pour God into a name that is already full for us? How could a Father feed some his children and not others? How can we know God in this name?

“Phillip said to Jesus, ‘Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied.’ Jesus 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.’”

Whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father.

The God who gives himself for us, this is the Father.

The God who suffers with his children, this is the Father.

The God who forgives, this is the Father.

The water that is poured into the glass named Father is Jesus.

Show us the Father? “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

There are many barriers to believing. Some come from our own lives, abusive parents, our own suffering and pain, the death of those we love.

Some barriers to belief come from the world around us, seeing the picture of a Somalin child - believing in a God able to spare that child's suffering but who does not.

God gives us Jesus to overcome all the barriers. You and I cannot see God; we cannot know and understand God. But Jesus we can know, Jesus who suffers as we suffer we can know. Jesus who loves all in need we can know. Jesus who teaches in words we can understand, Jesus we can know.

I believe in God the Father Almighty we confess. Whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father.