

Is God a Woman?

Both this week and next, Mary, the mother of our Lord, takes center stage.

Today we hear her deeply moving song, shouted out as she and Elizabeth, the mother of John the baptist, meet in their unexpected pregnancies – Mary, the teenage virgin; Elizabeth the old woman ready for retirement.

Next week we shall hear Luke's telling of the visitation to Mary, by the angel who announces the strange things that shall happen; as all of creation waits for Mary's answer, as even God leans down in anxious anticipation for the response of this young woman; a response on which all things hang in the balance.

So it is with some irony that while within these sacred walls, women are lifted up as the literal channels through whom God enters the world – just outside, on the front page of every newspaper and the lead story on the evening news are repeated stories of men treating women as little more than objects, as little more than playthings.

From our president to Roy Moore, who make up the "deny and defame" branch of these outrages, to Al Franken and Harvey Weinstein, the Hollywood and entertainment side of this mess, what is at long last seeing the light of day is something nearly every woman has experienced for decades: a persistent, consistent dehumanizing of half the human race by huge numbers of my half of our race.

Whether it's construction worker cat calls or white collar managers with leering looks, a persistent and very dark underbelly finally sees the light of day.

It's not a pretty sight.

And the question that comes to mind in the midst of all of this overt chest pounding of maleness is:

What if God is a woman?

What does God as a woman say to this male dominated world, to our male dominated values, to our male dominated truths?

Is the God so loudly proclaimed by our conservative Evangelical friends, a God wrapped up in the flag, in our wars, in our economic system, is this the God of the gospels, the God of Jesus, of Mary?

And might we find answers to these questions by sitting for a while with women, especially with the women of holy scripture?

We don't need to look far to find the many women of scripture who seem to embody the upside down, anti-alpha male, ways of God; women like Tamar, who disguises herself as a prostitute, sleeps with her father-in-law and gives birth to twins, who become great great great granddads of King David.

Women like Ruth, the illegal immigrant from Moab, who casts her lot in with her Jewish mother-in-law, sleeps with a drunken Boaz on the barnyard floor (before they get married), and gives birth to the granddad of King David.

Like Bathsheba, whom King David spies taking a tub on her roof top in all of her naked beauty, who has her husband killed and she gives birth to the wisest king ever to rule Israel, King Solomon, and the list just keeps going, until we get to today; with Mary, the newly pregnant teenager and Elizabeth, the six months pregnant old timer, who meet together not in shame or fear, but with joy and amazement at the audacity, the wildness, of God.

And these two marvelous women kick up their heels and sing songs of God lifting the lowly and telling the rich to hit the road because they

are both squarely within the bloodline of the savior — not a line up of the pious and squeaky clean, but a long story of creative, sometimes cunning, often brave, and always alive to life women who are immersed in the complexity and uncertainty of our daily existence.

What if God is a woman?

A young poet has this to say...

have you seen the things we can do
we lose enough blood in our lifetimes
to die of blood loss ten times
the pain we endure during childbirth
is equivalent to being
burned alive

we hold up half the sky
our arms are exhausted with the pain of it all
but we will never surrender
women hold the weight of the world
on their shoulders
as if it is as light as a feather
women hold the seas in place
with the palms of their hands
i hate to break it to you
but the ocean is a woman
only a woman could be so destructive
and yet so effortlessly beautiful
no wonder the sky fell in love with her

have you ever seen your mother cry?
do her tears ever remind you
of waves crashing against crumbling cliffs?
we fight wars with lipstick and love

we heal hearts with tight hugs and kind words
we mend souls by giving up pieces of our own
-tth

What if God is a woman?

Another writer of beautiful prose has this to say, in her recent reflections about Mary...

"In this time of great brokenness, we are reminded of the capacity we each have to repair that brokenness that we encounter wherever we are.

We are reminded by Mary of the grace of simple acceptance.

Mary is the original grassroots citizen.

She makes no claims for herself.

Yet she is extraordinary in her willingness to let herself be an instrument of events that will change the course of history.

We need to remember that our world today is not without hope when there are so many Marys working quietly, unfazed by power, whether it is manifested by the wings of an archangel, or the wings of Air Force One.

Mary takes the world as it is handed to her and becomes the bearer of the Word that will become man.

Might we too recognize the Divine, not where princes play and the powerful exert their sway, but where there is no power except the power of faith.

And grace.

Unlooked for.

Often undeserved.

Yet always there...

Yes, grace.

But only if we can somehow surrender as simply as Mary did." Dawn Webster

What if God is a woman?

In her song today, in the simple "yes" that she shall utter next week to Gabriel's question...will you bear the son of God?, Mary tells us all about God.

God is the One who favors the lowly, who scatters the proud and casts down the mighty from their thrones, who fills the hungry with good things, while the rich are sent packing, whose name forever and for all time, is Mercy.

What if God is a woman?

Might such a reality be the end of our alpha male proud as peacocks strutting?

Might such a reality force us, individually, communally, to change direction: to put compassion ahead of competition, mercy before money?

We are living in times when these questions demand our attention.

With nuclear saber rattling on the Korean Peninsula, a politics that cannot even agree on basic matters of observable facts, and a growing fear among some among us of those who are different, it's no exaggeration to suggest that unless we change course, unless we

rediscover the compassion and mercy that lies at the center of our faith, then indeed we are inviting hell, not in the next life, but here, today, in this life.

So, is God a woman?

No, no more so than God is a man.

God is God, who has poured out God's attributes on all of humanity, male and female and transgendered too – all with the invitation that we submit, with humility, to the truth of our circumstances: that love is stronger than hate, that unity is more powerful than factionalism, that beneath different skin colors or cultures or the shapes of our eyes, we are all of us, and each of us, beloved children of this God who creates all that is, who holds all things together – whose only desire is that we accept with gratitude this love, this grace, this mercy, forever and ever,

+amen

