

## **A Container of God's Presence**

A sermon preached at Niles Discovery Church, Fremont, California,  
on Sunday, April 15, 2018, by the Rev. Jeffrey Spencer.

Scriptures: [John 15:1-11](#) and [1 Corinthians 3:1-17](#)

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### *Moving into Triads*

If you're not already sitting in a group of three, please move so you are. If you didn't bring a cup, please pick one up from the cart.

### *Homily*

For many of us, our primary image of the Ark of the Covenant was formed by Harrison Ford, Steven Spielberg, and the movies. Of course, their image of the Ark of the Covenant was formed by the Hebrew scriptures. If you read about the Ark from that original source, you'll get the sense of the Ark almost being a container of God's presence. Wherever the Ark went, God was there, the *power* of God was there. And in the Hebrew scriptures, when the Temple is built, it becomes a container of God's presence.

But the Hebrew scriptures don't leave God in a box or in the Temple. "The Divine Presence is everywhere, always moving and always calling to people wherever they may be."<sup>1</sup>

If we look at the Gospels, we see Jesus declaring that the Divine Presence isn't just around us. It is *within* us. Jesus is quoted in John's gospel using "the image of the vine and the branches to emphasize that the same life that surges through all parts of the plant is similar to the life of God that surges through our being. God is no longer just 'out there.' God is also here, within us. The spirit of Jesus lives on in our bodily temples. We have become the home of God."<sup>2</sup>

We are mini Arks of the Covenant. God goes with us wherever we go. And we can carry God into each relationship and experience.

In a real way, our experiences shape our images and understandings of God. And our images and understandings of God shape our experiences of God. If we imagine God as the powerful one who is on high and remote from us, or if your experience of God is of God high and remote, it may be hard to imagine God within us. But that is the invitation: to see ourselves as containers of God's presence.

### *Breath Prayer*

Hold your cup in your hands and shut your eyes. Breathing in, pray: Faithful Love ...  
Breathing out, pray: ... dwelling in me

### *Guided Reflection*

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<sup>1</sup> Joyce Rupp, *The Cup of Our Life* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1997), 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

As you hold the cup, take notice of the space within the cup. That space is designed to hold something. Imagine that space holding something that brings you joy or comfort or peace.

Think of the space within yourself. It is filled with the Divine Presence.

Draw near to this Loving Presence. Sense this Loving Presence permeating your entire being. Rest in silence and tranquility

Listen to God say to you, "I am here."

### *A Time of Sharing*

You're invited to move to a time of sharing. This will be six minutes long. You can divide the time up so each person gets two minutes (I'll ring a bell every six minutes) or you can just share and the Spirit moves you. You can begin your sharing with this prompt or by sharing anything that came up for you during the guided reflection: I am most aware of God dwelling within me when ...

### *Scriptural Affirmation*

Jesus said, "Abide in me as I abide in you."

### *Prayer of Affirmation*

O Divine Presence, you have danced your way into my innermost being. O Mystery of Life, you have tended and nurtured me. You have enriched my spirit and watered my dryness. You have poured your abundant love into the veins of my soul. O Divine Presence, thank you for surrounding me with your love and pulsing your radiant energy through my being. Amen.