

Restore us, O God! We wonder.

LENT 2

Scripture

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17 or Matthew 17:1-9

Focus statement

In our humanness, we want to know, to define, and to have concrete answers for everything. However, life is filled with uncertainty. We trust that God, the great Mystery, is always present with us in our wondering.

Song suggestions

THEME SONG:

STJ 29 You Are All We Have

HWB 62 Who Is So Great a God

HWB 70 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

HWB 77 God of Many Names

HWB 338 I Know Not Why

HWB 594 Lord, You Sometimes Speak in Wonders

STJ 18 Over My Head

STS 34 You Are Holy / Eres santo

STS 45 Calm Me, Lord

STS 51 Quién dicen que soy yo? / Who Do You Say That I Am?

“God of Wonders” by Chris Tomlin

“Indescribable” by Chris Tomlin

“Revelation Song” by Kari Jobe

Call to worship

Leader: Mindful that God, the great Mystery, has called us,

All: *we gather to worship.*

Leader: Curious about God’s ways in the world.

All: *we gather to worship.*

Leader: Wondering in the face of uncertainty,

All: *we gather to worship.*

Leader: Receive our worship and our wonderings, O God, as we seek after you.

Offering prayer

With all that we have and all that we are, we honor you. Restore us, O God, to live in freedom and trust.

Confession and words of assurance

Leader: God of mystery, you call us into the unknown. But we do not always follow willingly.

Reader 1: We confess that we do not want to leave behind what is familiar. We prefer looking like those around us.

Reader 2: We do not want to change our well-refined beliefs. We prefer to think and believe in the same ways we always have.

Reader 3: We do not want to give up the comfort of our own self-sufficiency. We prefer to stay in control.

Leader: Forgive us, O Lord, when in our best effort to work *for* you, we fail to move *with* your Spirit.

All: *Stir us deep within. Recover a sense of your holy wonder and make room within us for the mystery of your Spirit.*

(Pause for silent confession)

Leader: God of mystery,

All: *restore us.*

Leader: Our help comes from the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth. The Lord will keep you from all harm. The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Amen.

Sermon seeds

A deep conversation in the dark of night seems to be fertile ground for questions of faith. Nicodemus's faith appears to be rooted in signs and proofs, yet he is not totally comprehending, and seeks more from Jesus. Faith, according to Jesus, has less to do with proofs, signs, claims, and human achievement, and more to do with God's love poured out for the world.

Abram says very little in the pivotal story from Genesis about God's call to him. There is so much he doesn't know about his future! He takes the first step and simply goes, as the Lord has told him.

Our desire for certainty can be great. We want to know, prove, and figure it out. Even as we want to be in control, we know we aren't. We live with uncertainty and anxiety. We seem to be living in an increasingly anxious time of information overload. How does God meet us here, in our anxiety?

Jesus invites Nicodemus into a conversation of wondering and mystery that travels away from predictable and logically clear paths. In the life of faith, we need the tools of wonder and curiosity. Jesus speaks to us as he helps Nicodemus explore faith not as calculated and proven, but as a gift of life given by God. God, who is great Mystery to us, engages our doubts, wonderings, and questions. But even more, as the psalmist recounts in Psalm 121, God meets us in our anxiety, assuring us that we are loved and held in God's all-embracing care.

Lenten ritual

Invite people to come the front altar table and take a stone from the rocky landscape. You may choose to say: "God is the rock of our salvation. God moves and wills through all our wondering and wandering."

Benediction

Full of wonder, full of curiosity, full of inquisitiveness, go trusting that God, the great Mystery, goes with you always. Amen.