



## God as Beloved

As the most intimate of all human relationships, as the one that to the majority of people is the most central and precious, the one giving the most joy and the most pain, I find that 'Beloved' as an image of God holds deep potential for me to try to understand the divine. I find it to be the most intimate of terms, one that speaks to trust, honesty, integrity, wholeness and reciprocity.

I know that I have never felt better and more right in this world than when I am in love, when I love and when I am loved. I have lived long enough in this world to have experienced relationships where I have loved and been loved in many ways.

What I have learned is that the best relationships are those that are built upon principles of reciprocity, unconditional love, trust and radical intimacy. In the best of relationships, there is a call to flow the bounty of that love into the world. By giving love to the beloved, it becomes natural to love others. By being loved, one is inspired to love. When we are well loved, we love well.

The image Beloved represents to me a relationship; one that is dynamic and ever changing. One whose primary characteristic is that it endures, it is faithful through all types of problems and challenges. The crux of this relationship is value. It is finding someone else valuable and being found valuable.

It is being seen, with radical intimacy and vulnerability and still being loved. It is being known down to the core of our being, our secrets, our shame, our fears, our ugliness and still being loved. God as the Beloved speaks to the beauty that comes from commitment, struggle, heartache and ultimate union. It speaks to loving not 'in spite of' but 'because of'.

God as Beloved speaks to relationship chosen in freedom, enduring and deepening through joy and grief. It speaks to that which comes from sharing the totality of your being with another in trust, in ways unique to only that relationship. It speaks to the power and rawness of vulnerability and the subsequent peace that comes while resting trustingly in the Beloved's presence.

Images of God are achingly limited. At their best they point but they cannot describe. Beloved-God-imagery holds for me, continually opening levels of understanding, challenge, and most importantly mystery. Using the imagery of God as Beloved, grounds me in an expansive and yet intimate God image of relationship, reciprocity, respect, need and love.

And so, as with the pillars of God is Present, and God is Love, the image of God as Beloved is something that I will preach, and I will teach, and I will try very hard to live into in service to you all.

Amen.

Pastor Marci