

Beginning of an essay by Ian Markham re Bp Budde from Dean of Virginia Theological Seminary, perhaps the largest Episcopal Seminary,

For my skeptical friends, they have a very simple question: how on earth can puny humans know what the creator and source of everything is like? It is hard enough to know what a black hole is like or how come the Washington Commanders are having a decent season even if they lost the NFC Championship? Given that these things are hard to work out, then trying to work out what is underpinning everything is really difficult. Surely, they conclude, it is impossible to know about ultimate reality. Agnosticism is the only rational position.

The question is a good one and we need a clear answer. We know what God is like because God has revealed God to us. As the Gospel of Matthew makes clear, the source of everything that is – the Father – is disclosed in the Son. You can know what God the Father is like by looking at Jesus the Son. Look at Jesus and you see God. The words and deeds of Jesus tell us what the ultimate reality is like.

Our obligation as Church is to constantly share with others what we learn of God in Christ. This is it. This is our mission.

You might have heard that our alumna **Bishop Mariann Budde recently generated some media interest because she had the temerity to ask the President of the United States to be merciful.** I did not intend to get involved but when emails and phone messages came to the Seminary condemning our teaching because we had produced a radical left-wing Marxist, I felt obligated to issue a statement. Thus far [the statement](#) has been viewed over 200,000 times. The point was simple. VTS teaches students how to read the truth about God from the incarnate God. And **we support Bishop Budde because she modeled in her sermon the art of reading of God from Christ.** Let me explain what I mean. If you listen to the sermon carefully, you will find it is deeply biblical. So, just walk with me through the concluding sentences of her sermon.

She said, “Our God teaches us that we are to be merciful to the stranger, for we were all once strangers in this land.” Here she is picking up on a major theme in the Old Testament- see Leviticus 19:33-34, Deuteronomy 10:18-19 – and of course the sheep and the goats story in Matthew 25, where our Lord says, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Then we have “May God grant us the strength and courage to honor the dignity of every human being” – this is of course from the Baptismal Covenant and is grounded in the doctrine of the Imago Dei – every human being is of infinite value because we are made in the Image of God.

Then having asked God to grant us the strength and courage to honor the dignity of every human being, she continues: “To speak the truth to one another in love.” This is a straight quote from Ephesians 4:15. And then she concludes with the words alluding to Micah 6:8 “and walk humbly with each other and our God for the good of all people. Good of all people in this nation and the world.” And so, the sermon ends.

Friends, it really was all Scripture. And this is a good model. The way to proceed in this moment is very simple. We preach the Gospel; we witness to the values of Scripture. We do not deviate from our core mission.