

# “The God for You”

Mark 1:9-15

1. Once upon a time, a group of very smart people got together and decided to invent a god for themselves. “It will be nice,” one said. “Yes,” another added, “that would be the socially respectable thing to do.” Besides, a third chimed in, “Our culture and our society needs this. Things are falling apart at the seams. An authority figure is sorely needed.” This group would provide it. So they set about to invent a god.

2. Yet some of them were not so sure. They warned: “If there is no God, all things are permitted. But if there is a God, we have to be responsible. We cannot say or do or think any old thing we want to.” Others insisted that there would no problem. “If it comes right to it,” they said, “we just won’t take him too seriously.” Still others said what amounted to the same thing: They would make god in their own image. In the image of man they would make god.

3. “So,” they started to ask, “what do we need in a God?” “All right,” one said, “what are we not?” “I get it,” one joked, “god has to speak in a **really deep voice**.” Seriously, though: we’re not eternal. Human life in this world is short. It goes by so fast. God has to be better than that. Let’s make him live forever, without beginning and without end. “Of course,” one observed, “that means this god would have a perspective we lack. He

would be smarter than us.” Another said, “Don’t you think he should be?” Then the response; “Well, yes, I suppose, but I am not so sure I like this.”

4. What else should a god be? “All-powerful. “Now you’re talking,” a voice called out from the back. “Any respectable god ought to be able to . . . rip the heavens open at a whim.” Even as a frenzy of excitement was growing among most of the group, a few of them were getting nervous about giving god that much power.

5. “God should be all-knowing too,” someone else added. Yet that meant He would know everything about us, down to the depths of our being – our innermost secrets, our most terrible thoughts. None of it would be private or privileged anymore. A few seconds of uneasy silence passed.

6. God should be compassionate! Yes, one after another they chimed in, god needs to be compassionate – like a father. “Maybe,” one said, “but not like my dad. How about something more like a kindly old grandpa who sits in a rocking chair on the porch. You know, the kind who wouldn’t hurt a flea, who always says, “That’s all right.” Someone asked, “You mean this god will know all this stuff about me, yet would never be judgmental?” “Yes, that’s the idea,” the rest said. Even as they were saying it, though, the words started to fail on their lips.

7. The chairman was trying to wrap up the meeting. He put the question to the group, “Is there anything else we need in a god?” Everyone had been thinking about one last thing, but no one wanted to say it. Yet how could this not come up? God should be holy. That is, completely apart from us, which entailed being upright and sinless. Even more: God is not to

be evaluated by our standards. "See, I told you this was dangerous," a growing majority said. "We could never live with such a god. What if he did split open the heavens and come down? Woe to us if we ever had to face him! We would be undone." Well, it had been an interesting experiment, they all concluded, but it ended up far too horrible to contemplate. So these very smart people simply decided: the less said about God, the better.

*8. When all the people were being baptized, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to stop Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and You come to me?" "Let Me have My way now," Jesus answered him; "that is how we should accomplish every righteous purpose." Then John gave in to Him and baptized Jesus in the Jordan. Then He stepped out of the water, and while He was praying, He saw the heavens torn open, and God's Holy Spirit, coming down on Him in the bodily form of a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are My Son, whom I love. I am well-pleased with You."*

9. John told Jesus, "We need to keep You holy. This is the place for sinners. You know the kind of judgment sinners get, the kind I've been preaching about. Please, Jesus, You baptize me. I should not be baptizing you." Jesus said, let it be so. Thus, the Greek says literally, it was fitting for them to fulfill all righteousness. Although John had said: "You, Jesus, apart," Jesus said: "No. Us, together."

10. The Word became flesh to bring together God and sinful people. Even then, it would have been one thing for God incarnate to walk uprightly amid the squalor, a righteous and sinless Man plunked down in a world of sin. At

His baptism, though, He was getting His hands dirty. The sin of the whole world was going to be washed onto Him so He, the Lamb of God, would take it all away.

11. He is approved in this work and for it. One thing the smarties in our made-up story never even considered was that there could be more than one person in God. Yet at Christ's Baptism the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and God the Father spoke: "You are My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased." He was pleased not only with Who Jesus is, but also with what He was doing. The Father said so again at the Transfiguration, before Jesus went to the plain and Jerusalem and the cross. In effect, He would declare it yet again when He raised His Son from the dead. This was not simply man speaking in a deep voice. This was God, speaking to His Son: "with You I am well-pleased."

12. He speaks to you with an amazingly similar message. Because your sin was washed onto Jesus and taken away and because Christ's own holiness is given to you, because Jesus did not want to stay apart from you due to your sin – in other words, because you are in Christ – God is well-pleased with you too. God is God on account of Who He is, not what we have made Him out to be. It's not a matter of what people have made of God, but what God makes of people when He baptizes them. He baptized you into the Christ Who was baptized for you. God is your Father. Why? Jesus became your Brother. He won't let anything come between you and Him. In His Supper you receive Him with His body and blood, nothing to come between. **IN THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST AND YOUR BAPTISM, THERE IS A GOD FOR YOU: THE ONE TRUE GOD.**