

I'm reading a book called *When The Church Was Young*, about the early church fathers and what they did and said and wrote. I read something recently that has a lot to say to us about who we worship and why we celebrate the Lord's Supper each week.

At the time Jesus came to this Earth, and for many decades afterward, a vast majority of people worshipped the Greek and Roman gods. As they grew up, they found out what these gods were like.

They were like people. They looked like people. They had all our positive character qualities to a much greater degree. They were exceptionally beautiful, intelligent, and powerful.

But they also displayed the worst of humanity's characteristics. They cheated on their spouses. They came to earth and used and abused the people who were worshipping them. They could be very fickle—on your side one minute, and then against you the next.

With gods like these, what would the people's response toward them be? Do whatever it takes to avoid their turning on you. Avoid that anger and power. So the people gave them gifts and offerings, like bribing the gods to leave them alone.

Some of the more cultured people in society believed in what's called "the unmoved mover." This is a god who isn't mean or dangerous, or even fickle, like the Greek and Roman gods. He just isn't interested. This god is self-absorbed, remote, keeps people at a distance. He has better things to do than to be concerned or even interested in what humanity is doing.

How sad that people thought that god (or gods) were somehow like this, and sadder still that they would choose to worship a god like this. I think part of the answer is that they didn't know any better.

And then along comes Jesus, and the people who followed Him, who spoke about Him, and who wrote about Him.

There are so many ways that Jesus is the exact opposite of the gods these people were following and serving. The most significant difference for them was the essence of what Jesus showed himself to be like. The idea that God cared about and loved humanity was a new and unexpected idea to most of these people.

This is how one of the early church fathers, Diognetus, in the book I'm reading, describes the difference between Jesus and these other gods:

*"[God reached out to touch us, but he did not do so] by sending to men some subordinate—an angel, or principality, or one of those who administer earthy affairs, or perhaps one of those to whom the government of things in heaven is entrusted. Rather, he sent the Designer and Maker of the universe himself...Now, did he send him, as a human mind might assume, to rule by tyranny, fear, and terror? Far from it! He sent him out of kindness and gentleness, like a king sending his son who is himself a king. He sent him as God; he sent him as man to men."*

This is the God that we worship. One who came to us and lived among us but who shows His godly characteristics even while living as a human.

Hebrews 2:17 says,

*"Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God."*

Though he was God who had become human, he demonstrated humility, unlike those pagan gods who were all about their power and their use of it.

Philippians 2:5-7 says about Jesus that,

*"though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."*

Jesus became human and lived among us, so He understands humanity, the good and the bad. He isn't remote from us: He became like us. Hebrews 4:15 says,

*"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."*

We celebrate the Lord's Supper each week in remembrance not only of His coming to us, but the reason that He came. Hebrews 9:26 tells us,

*"But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."*

Jesus is worthy to be praised and worshipped because of who He is and what He has done for us. He is a God who cares for us, who willingly chose to lower himself to live with us, and who understands what we're like and gives us what we need: mercy and forgiveness.

Let's pray.