

Sermon :: 26-Jul-2026
Proper 12, Year A

“ [nothing] in all creation will ... [ever] separate us
from the love of God ”

It never gets old ... for *him* or for *me*. Our dog Cooper, I've come to realize, enjoys playing PEEKABOO! The staircase at the rectory is a 'switchback'—it has a 180-degree turn in it ... which means that when Cooper is hanging out at the top of the staircase, I can go down several steps and then suddenly duck out-of-sight—just disappear from view! And then, after a few seconds, I pop my head back into view—I suddenly *reappear*! Every time I do this, Cooper does a double-take: He stands up ... shakes his head a little, as if to make sure he isn't seeing things ... 'prances in place,' shifting from front paw-to-front paw ... all the while, his eyes wide, bright and intent: *How* did he *do* that?! Then, I'll duck down again ... move up or down a few steps ... and pop back up again, in a *different* spot. Same reaction: head shake ... paw prance ... and this time maybe a little yelp ... which by the third or fourth time may become a playful bark. It's a simple game ... but like a parent playing with a child, *I* delight in *his* delight—*his* wonder.

I don't know about *dogs*, but they say playing PEEKABOO is good for *children*, as a way of building their listening skills ... strengthening their visual tracking ... and exciting their emotions, like surprise and joy. And also for developing their sense of 'object permanence': the understanding that something (or *someone*) still exists even when it's no longer visible; that just because you can't *sense* or *perceive* someone doesn't mean the person has vanished or abandoned you.¹ (In Cooper's case, that someone is also the designated provider of his nightly bedtime treat! Heaven forbid *he* ever vanish!)

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The joy of PEEKABOO for the 'adult,' of course, is already *knowing* that truth: being 'in' on the fact that disappearing *temporarily* from *sight* doesn't mean disappearing *permanently* from *life*; that the love, care and warmth between parent-and-child ... caregiver-and-pup ... do not go away, even if they can't lay *eyes* on one another, just this moment.

And I think this is, after a fashion, what St Paul is getting at in today's lesson from his letter to the Romans—one of my all-time favorite passages. If you'll allow me to work backwards ... Paul's *ultimate* premise is that we are wholly inseparable from God, in Christ: Nothing we can ever experience or even imagine ... not "affliction or distress or persecution or famine" ... not cancer or addiction or failure or rejection ... not selfishness or anger, depression or grief, anxiety or unworthiness ... "nothing"—*nothing*—in all creation will ... [ever] separate us from the love of God." And we see this, Paul says, in God's *Son*: God "gave [Jesus] *up* for ... us" ... and will also give us "everything *else*," too. In Christ, God has made ... and makes ... everything right between God and humanity.²

And God *does* this because God *loves* us ... indeed, *has* loved us from the very beginning of time. Yes, we can get all caught up in historical notions and interpretations of predestination and election and salvation ... but the *simplest*—and also, the most *Anglican*, most *Episcopal*—view is that God, first,

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/articles/zqntxbk#:~:text=When%20playing%20peekaboo%2C%20your%20little,skills%20as%20they%20get%20older> (accessed 07-Jul-2026).

² "It is God Who justifies" ... and Christ Who intercedes for us.

created humanity, in love ... and, then, *saved* humanity, in love: God makes salvation available not *stingily*—not only to a select (or “elect”) *few* ... but *freely*—to *all*. The *rest* is *our* individual choice: Will we answer Jesus’ *call* ... and thus, His *forgiveness* of our *sins* ... and allow Him to raise us into *glory*? From *God’s* perspective, however, there is no such thing as ‘too *many*’ saved ... ‘too *liberal*’ a showering of God’s grace ... ‘too *wide*’ a showing of God’s mercy. We are God’s *belovèd children*, for whom God always wants only the most wonderful.

And our being God’s *belovèd children* brings us back to ... *PEEKABOO*. For Paul’s jumping-off point in this whole line of reasoning is for us not to lose faith on account of our whatever we’re suffering *right now* ... in light of the true glory that God is *going* to reveal to us, in *Christ* (v 18). That is, in *this* life, we’re like little children whose cannot see their parents—don’t know they’re at-hand: Because we can’t yet see ... *now, here, today* ... the *reward* God has promised us, in Christ ... we grow fussy—*anxious* ... get upset—*distraught* ... maybe begin to *wail* a bit. We start thinking we’ve been left all *alone* ... *abandoned* ... *forgotten* ... maybe even *replaced*.

But in truth, God ... *always* the loving, kind and wise parent ... *knows* this ... and thus, ‘plays *PEEKABOO*’ with us. How? In our *praying*. Whenever we pray, the *seemingly* ‘invisible’ God *reappears* to us ... *reaffirms* God’s *presence* in us ... re-awakens God’s *bond* with us. But just like a baby (or a puppy) who must *learn* *PEEKABOO*—come to *know* their parent is still *present*, even when not *visible* ... we, too, have to learn to approach prayer as a joy-giving ‘*game*’ we play *with* God ... and not some burdensome or fearful *effort*’ we make *for* God. For when we pray, ¶we don’t need to rehearse all the things that are *wrong* with this world: God already *knows* them. ¶We needn’t name all the things we truly need and appropriately desire: God already *wants* them *for* us. ¶We shouldn’t worry about using the ‘right words’ ... or being ‘properly spiritual’ ... or ‘submitting’ to ‘God’s will’: God *made* us and *knows* us and already *loves* us, through-and-through.

No ... prayer is *PEEKABOO*: the reappearing, reassuring ... happy, giggly ... part of *PEEKABOO*! For just as the *child’s* only role in a game of *PEEKABOO* is to delight in his *parent* ... so, *our* only real role in prayer is to delight in *God*.

- Don’t *worry* about your posture or propriety. Just take a deep, cleansing breath ... wait a beat ... and then whisper, “Come, Holy Spirit, come”: Let the Spirit soar your heart heavenward; shower you with God’s goodness ... God’s generosity ... God’s grace ... *renew*, re-*lighten*, re-*smile* you, *overflowingly*.
- Set aside all your lists and requests, and just say, “Jesus I love You”: Lock the eyes of your heart on Him and *feel—know*—the love-bond that tethers Him to you, *unbreakably*.
- Don’t *fret* what you’re feeling or lamenting ... don’t *count* how long it’s been since the last time ... don’t *get stuck* on how angry you were with God *yesterday* (or have been for decades). No, whenever you pray—or even *attempt* to pray—God reminds you that you *always* dwell in God’s presence, *unconditionally and unceasingly*: In prayer, you *sense* God’s ‘return’—a return that *surprises* and *delights*, as you hear Jesus say, “I’m *here*, my darling ... I’m *yours*, my dear one ... and I’m *not going anywhere*.” For Jesus never stops

searching your heart ... never stops feeling your pain ... never stops speaking *His* love into *your* life.

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Far from being just a simple, goofy *game* ... PEEKABOO is also a beautiful way of *establishing* and *reaffirming* a deeply loving *bond*. And prayer is much the same: so *little* about *our* childish prattling on-and-on to *God* ... and so much *more* about our receiving, in grace, and confirming, in faith, *God's* parental commitment to *us*. For *when* we pray ... *whenever* we pray ... *however* we pray ... we suddenly see God's face, in Christ, again ... and—PEEKABOO!—delight in the 'return' of the One Who not only never *went* away ... but also never *will*.

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