

What If...God was one of us?

Today is the first sermon in a six week sermon series entitled, "What if...?" We will explore some questions about our faith and our scriptures over these next few weeks and I am excited to see where the Spirit takes us on this journey together. This first question is simple and yet, not so simple, in its theological understanding of our God that we worship and love and who loves us.

What if...God was one of us? My initial thinking was from the song entitled "One of Us" by Joan Osborne back in the 90s. Some of the words from this song hit me hard when I listen to it and when I put an image of God into my head.

There were simple words like what if God was a slob...like one of us...or a stranger on a bus, trying to make his way home...or summarizing, what if God was more like a human. Now, we have in our faith the man named Jesus who many believe to be God coming in human form to live on this earth, but we usually think about God as this high and mighty being who rules over all. But what we if take a minute to look at God in a different way. What if we humanize God? We can

humanize God in a way that allows us to see God has more understanding of the pain the sorrow that we go through, like Jesus did.

I was watching a movie with Brea a few months ago and it was a cute little Hallmark Romance movie with the main character being a pastor who just not too long ago lost his wife. This pastor's sister-in-law came into the picture and was a non-church-going person who didn't really understand what it meant to be in the church or a believer.

She did things that would be unheard of in some Churches like asking questions during the sermon time. She interrupted the sermon to ask a question. It got me thinking about what would happen if we did that? What if we asked questions during the sermon? How would I even feel about that if I got interrupted during the sermon and would I take the time to answer the question? Since my sermon series is all about "What if...?" questions, I realized that we should be allowed to ask questions in church. Especially if someone were new to the Christian faith or even just new to this specific church, wouldn't it be nice if they were able to ask questions about the worship or why we do

things this way or that way or why we say things that may be difficult to answer.

Now, this woman in the movie was having some difficulty in her life and was found one morning sleeping on the church pews. I sat there watching this movie and thinking, what we I do or what would Epler's Church members say if we found someone sleeping in our pews?

It is interesting for us to think about how we respond to those that are less fortunate and those that are different from us. Some of the church members in the movie questioned why she was allowed to do that? How dare she sleep on the church pews over night? These are new pew cushions, after all. Ok, that part about the cushions wasn't in the movie, but it really got me thinking.

There's a very large immigration debate going on right now in our country. There are travel bans to predominantly Muslim countries; there are kids that were mbeing separated from parents and although the separation has stopped we are now unsure as to how to reunite these kids with their parents.

With situations like this the questions to ask ourselves is my main question for this morning: what if God were one of those immigrant children. I'm not talking about Jesus again coming to SAVE us. I'm actually talking about God coming down again, not to be a savior as Jesus was, but to allow us to see God and allow God to see us and how we would act and react.

Growing up in the 90s there was a show called Joan of Arcadia which is where the "One of Us" song came from and there was a teenage girl who spoke to God who came in many forms including the janitor; a fellow student and the outcast kid; or people on the street; and it was always an interesting way to see how she reacted as a teenager to God speaking to her directly.

I don't necessarily want us to think if God were to come here and start talking to us as if he or she were a person but just how would we react to God and how we react to other people. Our scriptures this morning I've chosen for various reasons.

The Galatians text has always been one of my favorites and one that I think speaks volumes in today's society. With the Me-Too

movement and the struggles of women being assaulted as well as not being treated equally and fairly, it would be nice to think about there not being labels of male or female, rich or poor and that we could all actually be EQUAL.

People are being considered less than others just because of who they worship or if they are gay or straight or if they just are different. I like being made in the image of God from the Genesis text because I like to humanize God and I like to think that we are all special and unique in the way that we look and in who we really are.

In a MASH episode there is a man who wants a nose-job because he thinks that he has a large nose. The priest character tells the man that he is made in the image of God. The man replies, "well then God must have a nose the size of Toledo."

We are all different. We come from different backgrounds. Some of us look different. Some of us speak differently. We even worship differently, but that is what makes our worship and our human race great! What if...God was one of us?

In our Genesis text God said that they will *be like us and resemble us*. So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. Be like God. Be made in the image and the beauty and the wonder of God.

I don't want anyone to think that they are God. There are enough of those people out there who think that they are that important, but I want us to think about how we treat other people because we could make a difference in how we act and by asking ourselves the question of what if that was God. What if that person that is reaching out to me is God? What if that child who is driving me crazy in the line at the grocery store because they are screaming that they want candy, is God?

If we don't want to think about it in that way, then let's take one step back and like I was talking the kids about during the children's sermon ask ourselves the question of not what if God was that person, but what if we acted as if we would accept everyone as God does?

The beginning of our story...the beginning of the story of human kind comes from our Genesis text. It is a text that allows us to be remembering and realizing where we came from. It is a story of history

to share with generations upon generations and shows our lives being created.

The past week, the Reading Eagle came out to do a story on the new Green Natural Burial Cemetery to try and share the earth and put things back into the ground for we came from dust and to dust you shall return. We have been given the breath of life by God. We have been given the grace of our lives by the sacrifice of Jesus. We have been transformed by the Spirit who continues to come to be with us and guide us.

But what if...God was one of us? Would you welcome that stranger into your home? Would you be comfortable if we let a homeless person sleep on our pews? These questions then bring up more questions? What if...they steal from us or make a mess or don't believe exactly what we believe about our faith?

I don't believe that God walks among us. I don't believe that we need to be living in a way that challenges us to always ask the question, what if that person *is* God? But I do think that we need to ask ourselves What if...God was one of us?...and how WOULD we treat them?

What if...we treated people the way that Jesus treated them? What if...we thought outside the box and made a statement by allowing outsiders...in? What if...we loved everyone as we ought to? What if...we were the church? Amen.