

Easter 2013
Year C Luke 24:1-12

As a religious professional, I encourage people to spend Lent in particular in reflection and meditation and self-examination as we prepare for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are special Lenten mediations published by the religious publishing houses and Michael and I pour through religious texts looking for just the right passages from Henry Nouwen and Martin Luther King Jr and Clement of Alexandria and the desert mothers and all of those religiously spiritual types who have left us with profound thoughts and words about our relationship with God and creation. And of course we meditate on the stories in scripture, as we have done this morning on the resurrection passage from Luke and the passages from Acts and Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. We encourage your participation in all of this so that we can share with you the wisdom of our tradition and our faith.

But there are two pieces of text that we tend to not share with you. One is sung by a singer of the 1950s, Peggy Lee, and it's called "Is That All There Is?" The other is sung by Joan Osborne and is titled "What If God Was One of Us?" Peggy Lee's song asks the question *Is that all there is?* after describing tragedies in her life and wondering if that's all there is to fire and to love and to the circus; she sings that, if that is indeed all there is, then we should break out the booze and dance and have a ball.

Joan Osborne's song, "What if God was one of us?", is a little different than Peggy Lee's. It's not quite as hopeless and it has a catchier tune and refrain. Osborne sings

What if God was one of us, Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus, Trying to make his way home?

If God had a face what would it look like And would you want to see
If seeing meant that you would have to believe
In things like heaven and in Jesus and the saints and all the prophets?

And yeah yeah God is great yeah yeah God is good yeah yeah yeah yeah

What if God was one of us Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus Trying to make his way home
He's trying to make his way home Back up to heaven all alone
¹Nobody calling on the phone Except for the pope maybe in Rome

And yeah yeah God is great yeah yeah God is good yeah yeah yeah yeah

The thing about these two songs – which have most likely been heard by many more people than have heard the wonderful hymns that we're singing today – is that they give us two scenarios that I'm going to loosely paraphrase: on the one hand, there's nothing beyond this disappointing life; on the other hand, there's a God and there's hope that God might understand us even in the sometimes mundane rituals of our daily lives.

Keeping those scenarios in mind, we're here this morning to celebrate the Good News of Jesus Christ (and to assure Peggy Lee) and to hear once again the assurance that this life is not all there is. Our reason for this celebration is that through his resurrection, Jesus beat down death; he conquered death and came up from that battle alive so that we too will not be defeated by death but will live. That's the Good News that we

¹ <http://www.lyricsondemand.com/onehitwonders/ifgodwasoneofuslyrics.html>

celebrate. Oh, we can still break out the booze and dance and have a ball – we will most likely break out the Easter eggs and a nice dinner and honor this day in one way or another – but we celebrate in joy and hope rather than feel mired in a hopeless and disappointing and final way. Because we know that there's so much more than what we know – there is so much hope for the future of our lives and our spirits. Let me say it another way – we no longer have to fear death as the complete and final end of our lives.

We have hope through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that our lives—our souls and spirits – continue even after our bodies finish their work.

God – through Jesus Christ – was indeed was one of us and experienced all of the things that the people of his time experienced. If his story were to have taken place in our time, he could very well be that stranger on the bus, trying to make his way home. Yeah yeah yeah.

Do you believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead so that we might live? Really? Do you need proof of the resurrection? Proof is not what faith is about. We know from Paul's letter to the Hebrews that *faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*. And so we take that leap of faith into something greater than we can ever be—a faith that assures us that life continues even after death because of Christ's victory over death. If we do not have that faith in the resurrection, then we are consigned to the brokenness, albeit the basic goodness, of humanity, with no assurance of things hoped for. And because we are creatures with free will, we have a choice about in what and in whom we place our faith.

We are intelligent people; we use the reason that God has given us. After all, we are Episcopalians who place a high value on the place reason plays in our lives. We do not take our faith lightly and we continue to question and doubt and question again. But we know that we are on a spiritual journey, constantly reaching for the one who created us. It is that journey, that searching, that brings us to a place of faith in and knowledge of the crucial truth in the resurrection of Christ. Hear that again: The crucial truth. That is the conviction of things not seen.

So today we celebrate life and the assurance of things hoped for. We celebrate the lives of those who have gone before us, knowing that they still live in the light of Christ and in God's presence. This life that we have in this world is a challenge. It provides some wonderful times and some very sad times. We experience some incredible blessings yet find ourselves wondering where God is in the tragedies. But we know that because Jesus conquered death and is risen, we know that this life is not all that we have. Today we celebrate the event that undergirds our faith, gives us hope even in the midst of death, and causes us once again to sing our alleluias.

Christ is risen. Alleluia!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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March 31, 2013