

A few months ago, I decided I wanted to do a sermon series that would help us consider why God became human. It's really an intriguing concept. God is God. Why in the world, in the words of the apostle, would God choose to take on the form of a slave? That is, becoming a form that is subject to sickness and hurt, ill-treatment, hunger and thirst, persecution, and, of course, death. There's the positive side, too - being subject to friendship and familial relationships; to kindness and humor - feeling how the beauty of a sunrise or sunset, flowers and butterflies, affects the soul.

So many things to consider, about the embodying of God. Also, why God would come to live in Palestine 2000 years ago, and be part of the family as Jesus, from Nazareth.

What does the embodiment of God in Jesus mean for us today? How does it affect our faith? How does it call us to live in the world?

If I followed all of my musings about this, I could probably preach on it for a year. But I'm going to try and remain focused for seven weeks leading up to the third Sunday in September when we return to two Sunday services. (If anyone is trying to do the math, I will be taking one Sunday off in the middle of August for a family wedding in Boston...so that'll be around the halfway point.)

Today, I want to engage in a simple exercise inviting each of us to consider our personal understanding of Jesus. While the Christian faith isn't meant to be private, it is definitely personal. The gospel hits us all where we engage life, and for each of us it is a unique encounter. So we're going to do a little introspection, using a prompt that I got from one of my favorite theologians, Marcus Borg. Borg gave many, many lectures - particularly on the subject of who Jesus was in history. Once, though, he was asked to share his thoughts on Jesus, but make it personal - offer some personal reflections on his journey with Jesus. He says he had never been asked that before, and so he decided to turn it into an exercise. He got out a piece of paper and wrote "Me and Jesus" on it. Yes, it is incorrect grammar - and he doesn't explain why he wrote it that way, but I like it. It takes the relationship between Jesus and me and forces me to understand that in this particular exercise, it **is** about me. I am the one doing the considering. I am the one who knows best how I have related to Jesus and vice versa. This is not Jane's relationship, or Tom's relationship, it is **my** relationship with Jesus that I am considering.

So, please pull out the sheet from your bulletin that has "Me and Jesus" written across the top.

Read the prompt

We're going to spend some time in silence...somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 minutes. For you to work on this prompt. You can write; you can draw pictures; or, if you need, you can make a list of things to do today, take a nap, or

play a game on your phone. But I'd love it if you would engage in this exercise for a bit.

It is NOT my intention for you to share this with anyone else - unless you want to. However, I do want you to take this home and put it in a safe place, as I will want us to refer back on these when we get to the end of the series.

At the end of the time, open up the hymnal to "I Will Come to You (You Are Mine)" GtG#177. Say:

The note on the bottom says "Presuming to speak in the voice of God, as this song does, can only be done with integrity if the singers understand their words as an expression of what they believe about God's nature and God's intentions. It is an occasion for affirming faith, not for wishful thinking." I might add, that presuming to hear these words from the embodied God in Jesus makes quite an impact, too. Let's join together in singing them.