

**The Objectification of God  
("I Dream of Jesus")**

Matthew 28:11-15

Pastor Peter Hiett

April 30, 2006

Peter: I have this question for you guys. Do you know what a tornado is?

Kids: Yeah.

Peter: What's a tornado.

Kids: It's a funnel. It's a strong wind that sucks things up.

Peter: Yeah, someone last night said a horse carrier. They do that. What else?

Kids: It can suck you up.

Peter: It can suck you up, yeah. It's a huge whirlwind, like a storm. It's gigantic, and I saw one one time. And you know what I did? I caught it. I caught it in a bottle. Do you want to see it? [Peter has a corked bottle on the stage.]

Kids: Yeah!

Peter: Okay, but first, do you know how to duck and cover?

Kids: Yeah.

Peter: Okay, everybody practice duck and cover. Duck and cover! [Peter and the kids duck and throw their arms over their heads.] Okay, 'cause when a tornado comes, you need to duck and cover. Okay, you ready? Careful. [Peter takes the cork out of the bottle.] Duck and cover! [Peter ducks and covers on stage waiting for the tornado to blast out of the bottle. Nothing happens. Peter looks curiously at the bottle.] Huh. That's really weird. Maybe there's no such thing as tornadoes?

Kids: There is. I just heard one on the news.

Peter: Seriously, you heard it? There are tornadoes?

Kids: You can't catch tornadoes in a bottle.

Peter: What was that? You can't catch tornadoes in a bottle?

Kids: No!

Peter: Oh, maybe that's the problem. Maybe there really are tornadoes, I just can't catch them in a bottle. Why can't you catch them in a bottle?

Kids: Because they would leak out. It's too strong, and it's too big.

Peter: It's too strong, and it's too big. It's huge! A tornado is huge! A tornado won't fit in a bottle, huh?

Kids: Little ones fit in a bottle.

Peter: Little, little tornadoes, yeah, those little dinky ones. Well, you know, some people say there's no God. Did you know that?

Kids: Yeah.

Peter: You know why they say that?

Kids: Because they don't like Him.

Peter: Yeah, they don't like Him. That's true sometimes.

Kids: They don't believe in Him.

Peter: They don't believe in Him sometimes, yeah.

Kids: They can't see Him.

Peter: They can't see Him, yeah. You know what I think it is a lot of times? I think a lot of people don't believe in God because they can't fit Him in a bottle. Yeah, but God doesn't fit in a bottle, huh? Why? Why? Because He's huge, like a tornado. Let's pray. God, thank You that You're huge! And yet You love us. Forgive us for not believing in You because we can't fit You in our bottle, we can't control You. So, God, help us to believe in You and trust You anyway 'cause You're big, but You're also wonderful. And so I pray for these kids as they go down to Kids on the Mount that, Jesus, they would love You and You would bless them this morning. In Your name we pray, amen. Okay, you guys go ahead, go downstairs. The rest of you kids, stand up and let's worship.

Danny: So since God is huge and bigger than we can fathom, let's sing this song. It's an appropriate song to sing

then. See I was going to sing this song before I ever heard  
your children's sermon, Peter. There is a God. It's amazing.

[The worship band plays... ]

**“Immortal Invisible”**

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Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible  
Hid from our eyes;  
Most blessed, most glorious,  
The Ancient of Days;  
Almighty, victorious,  
Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting  
And silent as light;  
Nor wanting, nor wasting,  
Thou rulest in might.  
Thy justice, like mountains,  
High soaring above;  
Thy clouds, which are fountains  
Of goodness and love.

To all, life Thou givest,  
To both great and small;  
In all, life Thou livest,  
The true life of all;  
We blossom and flourish  
As leaves on the tree,  
And wither and perish  
But naught changeth Thee.

Great Father of glory,  
 Pure Father of light;  
 Thine angels adore Thee  
 All veiling their sight.  
 All praise we would render,  
 O help us to see  
 'Tis only the splendor  
 Of light hideth Thee.

[The worship band plays... ]

**“The Beautiful Letdown”**

by Jonathan Foreman (Switchfoot) 2002 Meadowgreen  
 Music Company (Admin. by EMI Christian Music  
 Publishing) Sugar Pete Songs (Admin. by EMI  
 Christian Music Publishing)

It was a beautiful letdown when I crashed and burned  
 when I found myself alone, unknown and hurt  
 It was a beautiful letdown the day I knew  
 That all the riches this world had to offer me would never  
 do  
 In a world full of bitter pain and bitter doubt  
 I was trying so hard to fit in (fit in), until I found out

That I don't belong here  
 I don't belong here  
 I will carry a cross and a song  
 where I don't belong (I don't belong)

It was a beautiful letdown when you found me here  
 and for once in a rare blue moon I see everything clear

I'll be a beautiful letdown  
that's what I'll forever be  
and though it may cost my soul  
I'll sing for free

We're still chasing our tails and the rising sun  
and our dark water planet still spins in a race  
where no one wins and no one's one

See I don't belong here  
I don't belong here  
I will carry a cross and a song  
where I don't belong (I don't belong)

I don't belong here  
I don't belong here  
I'm gonna set sight and set sail for the kingdom come  
Your kingdom come.  
Won't you let me down!  
Let my foolish pride forever let me down.

Easy living, you're not much like your name  
Easy dying, you look just about the same  
Would you please take me off your list?  
Easy living, please come on and let me down.

What a beautiful letdown, painfully uncool  
The church of the drop outs, the losers,  
the sinners, the failures and the fools.  
What a beautiful letdown,  
are we salt in the wound?  
Let us sing one true tune.

I don't belong here  
I don't belong here

Sermon:

If you're like me, there are times you feel like you seek God, and you don't find Him. It seems like the whole God-thing is not working... He works for others, but not for you. You don't understand and need direction.

Well, here at LMCC, we take your needs very seriously, and so we've been working tirelessly to develop a product that would meet those needs. And so it is with great pride that I introduce to you... "God in a Box." That's right, for only \$29.95, you can own "God in a Box."

Do you seek God and can't find Him?

Now you can keep Him in your closet or under your bed.

Does it seem like the whole God-thing isn't working?

"God in a Box" comes with a 40 day money back guarantee.

Do you need direction, purpose, and meaning for your life?

God in a Box contains exclusive diagnostic tools that give you access to the knowledge of good and evil.

Be like God: Impress your friends and family 'cause you've got "God in a Box." "God in a Box..."

And for those of you busy and on the go...

"God in a Bottle."

Dream dreams with "God in a Bottle."



We're so proud of these products we've developed a new theme song and a new slogan for our church. [Peter shouts to the sound tech in the back.] Hit it Larry!

[The intro to "I Dream of Jeanie" is seen on the screens as the theme song plays in the background.]

"I Dream of Jeanie..." now that's a typo. It shouldn't say, "I Dream of Jeanie," but "I Dream of Jesus."

Wouldn't that be cool if God was a thing we kept in a box, if God was an object we kept in a bottle, if only God could be objectified—like a pretty woman in a bottle or a magazine—you know, objectified.

Matthew 28:11-15,



*While they [the Marys, the strange women] were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.*

You'll remember that in the last chapter the chief priests and Pharisees of the land of Israel went to Pilate from over the sea concerned about keeping Jesus in that box we call a tomb. So this beast from the sea (Rome) and this beast from the land (Israel) conspire together to seal the tomb (a symbol of Rome's authority) and post a guard (Rome's power).

But you know the story...

Jesus rises from the dead. God gets out of the box, and He's on the loose.

So now to maintain the illusion of control, as if they've still got God in the box, they invent a lie and enforce it with money. They're in the god business... like pimps are in the harlot business.

Two beasts, worldly government and religion, and the harlot, the economy that rides them, they join together

to battle the Word of the strange woman.

See, it's like Principalities and Powers right out of the Revelation.

Madelyn L'Engle writes,

As I read the Old and New Testaments I am struck by the awareness therein of our lives being connected with cosmic powers, angels and archangels, heavenly principalities and powers, and the groaning of creation. It's too radical, too uncontrolled for many of us, so we build churches which are the safest possible places in which to escape God. We pin him down, far more painfully than he was nailed to the cross, so that he is rational and comprehensible and like us, and even more unreal.

“We pin Him down” in order to control and comprehend Him. We can comprehend dead things—objects—but we can't comprehend live things—subjects, persons.

So long ago in the garden, Eve took the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You see, it was an effort to comprehend the good, comprehend Him, capture Him and possess Him in a box.

In Jerusalem, they kept God in a box called the temple. Remember God told them to build a tent so His presence could dwell with His people and move with His people. It was David that came up with the idea of a stone temple.

You can understand that. It's unsafe to store uranium in a tent... you need a stone bunker. Imagine if

God got loose and could materialize anywhere and everywhere, not just at church... That would be freaky!

In 2 Samuel 7, God gets perturbed at David for wanting to build a temple and says that “a son of David” would build His temple with an eternal throne.

You’ll remember that Jesus, Son of David, referred to His body as a temple. He said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I’ll rebuild it.” John says that, “Jesus was referring to the temple of His body,” and yet Jesus was standing in the stone temple which He prophesied would be destroyed in that generation.

Well, you know the story...

The civil authorities and the religious authorities get together and nail Jesus down. They crucify Him.

To kill a person is to objectify a person, turn a person into meat... nothing but the box, breaking the body and spilling the blood. The life is in the blood.

You know the story...

The children of Eve, the children of Israel, the people of this world have the heart of a whore.

Ever since the garden we’ve chosen:

The knowledge of good over the Good

(The presence of Good).

The knowledge of love over Love

(The Law over Love).

The attributes of God over God.

The object of God over the person of God.

We've chosen control... the objectification of God.

You know the story...

We nailed Jesus to that tree and as His body rips, the temple rips, the tomb rips, the box rips... blood spills out, mercy, judgment, and life spill out. And then where there once was a harlot, the Bride of Christ begins to appear, washed white in blood.

You realize that scripture is the outline of the greatest love story ever told. God limited Himself at creation. He limited Himself in that stone temple in Israel, and He limited Himself in His temple of flesh... Jesus. God placed Himself in a box, in a manger in Bethlehem.

We objectify God, so God hid Himself in an object, a human body. God hid in a bottle, like a treasure in a field. So you might stumble upon Him, use Him, abuse Him, break Him, ingest Him, place Him in the tomb of your heart where He'd rise from the dead, show you His mercy, and make you His bride.

Saturday, September 18, 1965, Captain Tony Nelson, an astronaut on a flight from the NASA Space Center, Cape Kennedy, Cocoa Beach, Florida crash landed on a desolate island. He fell there.

Well, seeking material to make an S.O.S. signal and save himself, he found a strange green bottle. He opened it and a beautiful female genie appeared.

It's a fairy tale, but remember,  
fairy tales can be extremely true.

Well, he takes her home. She cooks and cleans. He owns her, like an object. Because it was 1965 and primetime TV, she wasn't a harlot, just a house-slave.

She saved him, but for four years Major Nelson dated other girls and used Jeanie, while every kid in America would think to him or herself, "Major Nelson, are you blind?! Marry Jeanie. She's sweet. She's funny. She's cute, and Tony, she loves you. She loves you!"

In fact, that's where all the drama and comedy comes from. She wouldn't *make* Tony love her with magic, 'cause that wasn't love. But she loved Tony so much, she wouldn't stop messing with his life, and she wouldn't stay in her bottle.

Finally, episode 124, December 2, 1969, Jeanie and Tony get married. She had all these astounding powers, but she romanced Tony to herself in weakness.

Maybe the love of God is like that.

Maybe God "subjected all creation to futility in hope."

Maybe God "emptied Himself and took the form of a slave [a house-slave] and descended into the desolate world..."

In the hope that we might pick Him up,  
take Him home, break His heart, then see  
His heart, and fall in love.

Well, in Matthew 28:11-15, the authorities refused to see His heart—Jesus—but they could not keep Him in the box. He wouldn't stay in the bottle.

I mean, all these efforts at objectifying God had failed: The temple ripped, the tomb ripped, the body ripped, and God got out.

So, in a last ditch effort to maintain control, they concoct a lie and purchase it with money.

Now, the elders and the guards know it's a lie, but they'd rather save their own lives than surrender to the truth.

The elders say to the guards, "Tell people that the disciples came and stole the body while you were sleeping." Now, it's an absurd lie for many reasons, like, how do the guards know the disciples stole the body if they were sleeping?

You see, all arguments against the resurrection are arguments from silence... the testimony of the sleeping.

The testimony of the tone deaf would not be allowed to negate the reality of music [writes John Polkinghorne, the physicist from Cambridge] and so it seems reasonable that those who claim never to have had a sense of the divine should not be given equal weight with those (the majority in the history of mankind) who have.

All the arguments against God are arguments from silence, and they assume that God is an object, like a force field, an energy cloud, or plasma.

Science is the verification of hypothesis regarding matter and energy in a controlled environment. If you *only* believe science, you can *only* believe matter and energy (objects), which means you can't believe in truth, love, or persons.

Therefore, you think your wife is an object, and you don't love her. That is, you view her as your whore for you don't believe in persons.

You don't even believe in science, for science cannot be true 'cause you don't believe in truth.

Indeed, you don't believe because faith cannot be verified by the scientific method. So everything is nothing for there is no meaning. It's intellectual suicide for there is no intellect. It's personal suicide for there are no persons.

Objectify God, and we objectify ourselves.

The authorities use lies to maintain control to keep Jesus dead and themselves dead... all objects.

There are intellectual lies. There are political lies. God is outlawed in places like China, yet He's rising from the dead all over that country. In the U.S. we outlawed prayer in public schools. Someone said as long as there are math tests in school, there will be prayer in school. You're not going to keep faith, hope, and love from rising from the dead before math tests.

There are intellectual lies. There are political lies. And there are ethical lies. I think all sin is the objectification of God. Alcoholism is God in a bottle. Greed is God in a box (or shopping cart). Sin is making things into God or God into things. What is gossip, slander, murder, rape, pornography, adultery, harlotry but ignoring the breath of God in people and turning them into things... objects.

Objectify God, and you objectify yourself, and you objectify all things. That is, everything dies. "The day you eat of it," God said, "you will surely die." The serpent said, "You will not surely die." The lie is control.

There are intellectual lies, political lies, ethical lies, and religious lies. It was the religious authorities that spoke the lie. Why? Because they were experts in the Law. They

had the knowledge of good and evil. They controlled the box. They ran the system—the religious economy.

They were really into God, as long as He was dead...

like a system,  
a program,  
a tradition.

Like an object they could use.

Like a whore.

They were dead.  
Their world was dead,  
but at least they were in control.  
In control of hell...  
their own hell.

Are you in control?  
Are you an expert at God?  
Does He work for you?  
Do you work for Him? Like a business.  
Do you have an arrangement?  
Are you lonely?

Do you see why a resurrected Jesus was such a threat... to Hell? And why He's such a threat to the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness? Do you see why He's such a threat to all the authority structures of this world?

Paul said God ordained them (Romans 13:1), but he also says God disarmed them in Jesus (Colossians 2:15).

Do you see why Jesus is such a threat to the powers that be? He takes away their weapons of fear and undercuts their authority.



Matthew begins this text with the word, “while.” While the Marys were going, the authorities were meeting. See, two things were happening at once.

In the city, Old Jerusalem (most likely in the stone temple), the chief priests, elders, and guards (the principalities and powers) were inventing lies to maintain control. Lies are all they have left. They are disarmed, and their temple is desolate.

*While* out on the road by the Garden tomb the Lord of Hosts, Glory from behind the veil, Son of God and Son of Man—Jesus the Christ—appears to the Marys and says, “Hi!”

The implications of this are utterly staggering because these women are the last and the least. These women are just about as far away from the authorities in the temple as you can get. Mary of Magdalene had been oppressed by demons and most likely had lived the life of a whore, but now she is the Bride of Christ, temple of the living God, and the new Jerusalem.

And where’s the whore now?

Well, Jesus appears to Mary, says, “Hi!” “No fear,” and “Go tell.” In that day, women weren’t even allowed to testify in court, let alone a woman like Mary. You see, Mary really is God’s rebellion in a fallen world.

The resurrection entirely undercuts the authority structures of this world.

I mean, God is the ultimate authority, and He entirely bypasses the middle man on Easter morning. He might use the authorities of this world for certain things, like highways, schools, and taxes, but not to reveal Himself for He’s not an object but a person. His glory is not worldly power but sacrificial love.

Well, that drives intellectuals, politicians, and all rulers crazy 'cause they can't be an authority over anything that matters for all that matters is love, and God is love.

It drives pastors, elders, and Bible study leaders crazy as well. You see, I can be an expert at languages, theologies, and ecclesiologies, but I must always be a novice at love, and God is love.

I may know Greek better than you, but the dumbest, nuttiest person here may know Jesus better than me. Just like the doctor may know my cholesterol count better than anyone, yet he doesn't know *me* at all. My kids know me. The expert knows the object. My wife and children know *me*.

So we religious experts may post guards at the tomb to keep order. We may build temples, buildings, and schools, and study for years. We may comprehend astounding theologies and call ourselves Masters of Divinity. And then Jesus, Himself, may materialize in front of the gardener.

Do you see how frustrating that is?

Jesus appears to Mary and says, "You go tell my brothers. You go tell the Apostles, pastors, elders, and Bible Study leaders."

So you see, there are positions of authority in the kingdom,

but the authority is not power over objects,  
it's submission to subjects.

It's not being first,  
but last.

It's sacrificial love.

Jesus appears to Mary, tells her to tell the Apostles.

I think Matthew is saying, “You must be Mary before you can be an Apostle. You must be last in order to lead. You must surrender to Jesus before you can talk about Jesus.”

And so, first and foremost, I’m not to be an expert on a topic, but a witness to a person. Jesus is not a topic. He is a living person. Not simply an object, but a subject.

If I say to you, “I’m an expert on Susan Hiett. I’ve got her totally figured out, and I’m in control. If I give her chocolate, she’ll give me what I want (wink, wink, nudge, nudge).” Well, I’ve just reduced her to an object, like a whore.

But if I say, “My wife is a mystery. I don’t have her figured out. Yet she’s always been gracious and kind.” Well, I’m not an expert on a topic, I’m bearing witness to a person.

Jesus is a person.  
Not simply an object, but a subject.

So you might ask, “Do you believe in objective truth?”

Well, I believe in *more* than objective truth, for Jesus is an object, but more than an object. He’s a subject.

So you might wonder, “Does that mean truth is relative?”

No, it means Truth is *your* relative. It means Truth is a person who is related to you. The Truth is always true, but He has made Himself related to you, like a husband or father.

My son, Coleman, was talking to my daughter, Becky, and he said, “Dad tackled me, and He gave me a wedgie!”

Becky said, “He never gave me a wedgie. I even set up a controlled environment to test the hypothesis that Dad gives wedgies, and he did not. Therefore, you are a liar, and Dad does not exist.”

Well, that would make sense only if I was simply an object, a force field or thing. But I’m a person, a living dad. I give Coleman wedgies, and Becky kisses, but I remain me.

I am Dad,

and I will wedgie whom I will wedgie,  
and I will kiss whom I will kiss,  
and if you have a problem with that,  
you have a problem with my living dadness.

Well, the powers that be had a problem with God’s living dadness. They had a problem with Jesus’ living husbandness.

You know, Abraham, Moses, David, Ezekiel, and Isaiah, they all stayed in their tombs so the authorities built them monuments and capitalized on their words.

Buddha, Mohammed, and Confucius, they all stayed in their tombs, but Jesus did not and that was a problem.

After Easter, He starts showing up all over the place. I mean, even in the Bible, before Easter they kept pretty good track of Him. And then you get after Easter, and He’s showing up here, and He’s showing up there, and nobody’s quite sure where He is. He’s just popping up all over the place, bypassing the powers that be and changing the world through old fishermen, tax collectors, and prostitutes... the last and least of these. Not through religion, but through relationship ‘cause God is not just an *object*, but a *subject*.

Not an object, but a subject.  
 Not a what, but a who.  
 Not a law, but love.  
 Not a program, principle, possession,  
       but a Person, a Father, a Husband.

And that kind of changes our questions.

“Does God work for you?”

If you ask me, “Does Susan work for you?”

I think I’d be offended. Are you implying  
       she’s, like, a harlot?

Do I work for God? Like a harlot, turning tricks to  
       earn His riches?

Do I *work* for God or *love* God and *seek* God?

He’s the subject, not your object.

Well, if I can’t trap God or buy God, where will I  
 find God? I can’t tell you exactly where and how, but I can  
 testify to His character by telling you His story... the  
 Gospel.

On Easter morning, He didn’t appear at the  
 seminary, the temple, or the courthouse. He appeared to  
 Mary. The angel said she was “seeking Jesus who was  
 crucified.” So here are some tips for finding Jesus. They’re  
 just tips.

#### 1) Seek Jesus.

Jesus said, “Seek and you will find.” Mary  
 sought *Jesus*, not the *attributes* of Jesus. She  
 sought the person, not the thing. The subject,  
 not the object.

She knew what it was to be used, to be

objectified. So she saw Jesus and sought Jesus. So many think they're seeking Jesus, and they're seeking control of Jesus—God in a box... a genie, not a bride. We dream of genie, not Jesus. Seek Jesus and you will find Jesus because...

## 2) Jesus finds you.

Mary sought Jesus, and Jesus found Mary. In fact, you seek because you've already been found. "No one comes to me unless the Father draws him," said Jesus. "In him we live and move and have our being," wrote Paul.

So we're like fish in a sea, looking for water. We're like a baby in the womb, looking for her mother.

Jesus is "the light of the world." Jesus is the "Logos," the meaning of all things. And Jesus is a person. That implies Light is a person and Meaning is a person. Even quantum physicists say light is, like, personal, and all things depend on some person's meaning, as if all things exist upon someone's word... The Word. It's like the universe is alive... subject, not object.

I bet if we saw that Word, it would, like, scare us to death... unless, of course, we knew Him.

Eight years ago in Cairo Egypt, a man pronounced dead regained consciousness lying on a gurney in the morgue. His resurrection so startled the paramedic that he collapsed and died.

Imagine if the entire universe that you thought was dead came to life and said, “Hi! (Chairo), it’s me.” That would scare you to death, unless you knew Him.

Well, Jesus is Light, Truth, Life, Meaning...  
The Word.

### 3) He is everywhere and rising in you.

Jesus is faith in you. “Christ dwells in your heart through faith” (Ephesians 3:17).

Jesus is hope in you. “Christ in me, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

Jesus is love in you. Christ is God with us, and God is love.

So you see, Christ was rising in Mary’s heart as she sat in front of the tomb door. He was rising in her heart so she wouldn’t die when He rose before her on the road on Easter morning.

- 4) And now she found Him where she thought she lost Him.

That is, where she thought she lost her faith,  
hope, and love... at the tomb. She went back  
to the tomb.

- 5) She found Him where she was most afraid to look.

There are people who ask all sorts of  
objective questions about God, and say they  
can't find Him. But they will not look where  
they're most afraid to look because of  
subjective questions about themselves. They  
won't look at their own tomb.

Perhaps it's a memory of abuse.  
Perhaps it's a place of deep shame.  
Perhaps it's a place where they sinned.

It's where they think they lost faith, hope,  
and love. But I bet He's still there waiting to  
be found, waiting to give new meaning to all  
their sorrows, sin, and shame.

Mary found Him where she most needed to  
be saved, where she crucified her Lover with  
her sin.

She found Him in the garden  
where He'd been nailed to a tree.  
We nailed Him to the tree  
of the knowledge of good and evil.



We nailed Him to the tree  
of law with our sin.

Our sin objectifies God, kills God. We break  
His body and spill His blood with sin. And  
He allows it.

But go back to the garden and back to the  
tree, confess your sin, and that tree of  
knowledge becomes the tree of life. We  
don't take the fruit, He forgives the fruit. He  
gives Himself (Person not program). He is  
The Good. Body broken and blood shed...  
place it in your tomb, and He rises from the  
dead.

John tells us, "In the place where Jesus was  
crucified there was a garden, and in the  
garden a tomb." Mary finds Jesus in that  
place.

6) Mary finds Jesus at the cross.

7) Pay attention to strange people.

The last and the least. John records that at  
first Mary thought Jesus was the gardener.  
Luke records that the Apostles didn't believe  
Mary. They thought she was insane.

I've found Jesus in strange women who  
seemed insane way more than I found Jesus  
in seminary. Or maybe I should say, the  
Jesus I learned about in seminary, I

encountered rising from the dead in strange people and in the places I was most afraid to look.

So pay attention to strange people (come to the Living Stones service).

8) We're all strange people.

We're all different. The authorities, the Pharisees, all seem the same because they're all putting on an act.

If we put God in a box, we put ourselves in a box, too. We become an act, a robot, an object. But Jesus doesn't want an act. He wants you, unique in all the world.

9) You will find Him in your life... your life.

Mary finds Him on her road, in her life. Paul D'Arcy writes, "God comes to us disguised as our life." Karl Barth wrote, "If a man believes and knows God, he can no longer ask, 'What is the meaning of my life?' But by believing he actually lives the meaning of his life." His life, his individuality, his failures, his sins, and his grace... the grace God gives him that fills those sins.

You see, faith, hope, and love in you—that is, mercy in you; that is, Christ in you—looks different than Christ in anyone else.

And one more thing...  
 If I'm a fish in the sea,  
     perhaps the best evidence for water  
         is me (for if there's no water,  
         there's no me).  
 If I'm a baby in a womb,  
     perhaps the best argument for my  
     mother is me, my life. She comes to  
     me as my life—like blood through a  
     cord.

Well, Mary found Jesus in her life, her story.  
 Then found her life in Jesus. And now her  
 story is God's story... the Gospel. He gave  
 His meaning to her life and made it His.

10) Find Jesus in your story, and your story becomes  
 HiStory—the Gospel.

Yet, on our own, we don't find Jesus  
 because we don't seek Jesus. We don't  
 dream of Jesus. We dream of genie. We  
 dream of genie, and yet all this time, God is  
 dreaming of us.

And so God in His infinite mercy, limited Himself  
 and descended into this desolate world so we might pick  
 Him up and place Him in our tomb. I mean, He allowed us  
 to objectify Him to the point of death on a cross.

We broke His body, and His life spilled out. [Peter  
 breaks open the "God in a Box" box sitting on the

communion table and then pours wine from the “God in a Bottle” bottle into the communion cup.]

It was an ambush, an ambush of love. Remember the burning bush on Mount Sinai? He bushed us on Mount Sinai. He AM-bushed us on Mount Calvary. The I AM ambush.

We broke His body, and His life spilled out, an ambush for it turns out He wasn’t only an object. He is the subject... the Life, the Love, the Person, the Fire.

And so the Glory from behind the veil, the Fire, He took bread, and He broke it. He ripped it saying, “This is my body which is for you. Eat it.” And in the same way, He took the cup, and He said, “This is my blood of the covenant poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you. Take, eat, and drink.”

So we invite you to come to the table, tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup. The black cups are wine; the purple cups are juice. They’re both life. They’re both fire. Take the life, Mary, and place it in your tomb. And then let Him rise in every dark and scary corner of your life. In other words, let Him out of the bottle. Let Him out of the bottle, bride of Christ. ‘Cause don’t you see it? He loves you! And so dream of Jesus and let Him out of the bottle. Believe the Gospel, amen.

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So, did you come to the table? I mean, with, like, just a mustard seed of faith, hope, and love? ‘Cause then I know something about you. In the words of the angel, the messenger on the road, you seek Jesus. In other words, you

dream of Jesus. And so, do not fear. Do not fear. In other words, prepare to live life uncorked. Let Him out of the bottle, Mary. Let Him out.

Now, I don't know exactly what that means for you because it's not simply a system; it's a relationship. But you're related to Him, so ask Him. Talk to Him. Sometimes people hear voices. I only heard a voice once in my life. Usually I think, well, that smells like love, that's Him. That smells like truth, that's Him. That looks like life, that's Him. And so ask Him.

I don't know exactly what that means for you. Maybe it means for you, going back to places where you thought you lost Him, places of fear. Perhaps places of sin, surrendering your sin and saying, "Jesus, I can't do this. So I give it. I give myself to You. Rise in me. Heal me."

Perhaps it means living without the boundaries that you've lived with, living without the box that you've put God in, living without telling God, "Well, you can't do this, and you can't do that." Now, that doesn't mean that He'll do evil things because He's always true to His character, and He is The Good, so you can trust Him.

I don't know exactly what it means for you. Maybe it means paying attention to strange people. I used to think that, you know, if someone talked to Jesus somewhere along the line, they were right about everything, and I'd get so confused 'cause I'd say, "But, God, they're an idiot." And they are! But you see, God likes to appear to little children and old men under bridges that are stoned out of their mind. He just gets out of the box and shows up everywhere. So pay attention to strange people.

Whatever it means, it means this, hope... hope because He will not stay in the tomb. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

If you'd like prayer, we have a prayer ministry team. They'd love to pray with you. They'll be down front.

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Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne. . . . Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. . . . Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. . . . And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations." . . . And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

*Revelation 12:5, 12:17-13:1, 13:11-12, 17:3-5, 21:2 (ESV)*

As I read the Old and New Testaments I am struck by the awareness therein of our lives being connected with cosmic powers, angels and archangels, heavenly principalities and powers, and the groaning of creation. It's too radical, too uncontrolled for many of us, so we build churches which are the safest possible places in which to escape God. We pin him down, far more painfully than he was nailed to the cross,

so that he is rational and comprehensible and like us, and even more unreal. And that won't do. That will not get me through death and danger and pain, nor life and freedom and joy.

*Madeleine L'Engle, Glimpses of Grace*

And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.'"

*Matthew 28:9-13 (ESV)*

The testimony of the tone deaf would not be allowed to negate the reality of music and so it seems reasonable that those who claim never to have had a sense of the divine should not be given equal weight with those (the majority in the history of mankind) who have. Even in science we are aware that our seeing of the world is always seeing-as, our vision is refracted by those 'spectacles behind the eyes' imposed by our theoretical preconceptions.

*John Polkinghorne, Science and Creation*

"And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

*Matthew 28:14-15 (ESV)*

People are uncomfortable with mystery (God) and mess (themselves). They avoid both mystery and mess by devising programs and hiring pastors to manage them. A program provides a defined structure with an achievable goal. Mystery and mess are eliminated at a stroke.

*Eugene H. Peterson, The Contemplative Pastor*

Years ago Morton Kelsey, in surveying Roman Catholic lay people, found that the majority of lay people reported having a life-changing, mystical experience with God. But when questioned, the majority of those people had never told anybody about it. And when further

questioned, they said the last person they would tell is their priest, “Because he would think I was crazy.”

*Will Willimon*

Reason will be replaced by Revelation. . . . Justice will be replaced by Pity as the cardinal virtue, and all fear of retribution will vanish. . . . The New Aristocracy will consist exclusively of hermits, bums and permanent invalids, the rough diamond, the consumptive whore, the bandit who is good to his mother, the epileptic girl who has a way with animals will be the heroes and the heroines of the New Age, when the general, the statesman, and the philosopher have become the butt of every farce and satire.

*Herod convincing himself that he  
must murder the Christ child in  
For the Time Being by W.H. Auden*

God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

*1 Corinthians 1:28-29 (ESV)*

I raise against the Christian church the most terrible of all accusations that any accuser ever uttered. . . . The Christian church has left nothing untouched by its corruption. . . . The “equality of souls before God,” this falsehood, this pretext for the rancor of all the base-minded, this explosive of a concept which eventually became revolution, modern idea, and the principle of decline of the whole order of society—is Christian dynamite.

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

*Matthew 7:7-8 (ESV)*

But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” So they



departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

*Matthew 28:5-10 (ESV)*

Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

*Luke 24:10-11 (ESV)*

"One has only to look at her and talk to her to see that she is not mad." ~ "But then," said Susan and stopped. She had never dreamed that a grown-up would talk like the Professor and didn't know what to think. ~ "Logic!" said the Professor half to himself. "Why don't they teach logic at these schools? There are only three possibilities. Either your sister is telling lies, or she is mad, or she is telling the truth. You know she doesn't tell lies and it is obvious that she is not mad. For the moment then and unless any further evidence turns up, we must assume that she is telling the truth." ~ Susan looked at him very hard and was quite sure from the expression of his face that he was not making fun of them. ~ "But how could it be true, Sir?" said Peter. ~ "Why do you say that?" asked the Professor. ~ "Well, for one thing," said Peter, "if it was real why doesn't everyone find this country every time they go to the wardrobe? I mean, there was nothing there when we looked; even Lucy didn't pretend there was." ~ "What has that to do with it?" said the Professor. ~ "Well, Sir, if things are real, they're there all the time." ~ "Are they?" said the Professor; and Peter did not know quite what to say.

*C.S. Lewis, The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*

"Child," said the Lion, "I am telling you your story, not hers. No one is told any story but their own."

*C.S. Lewis, Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

"Oh, Aslan," said Lucy. "Will you tell us how to get into your country from our world?" ~ "I shall be telling you all the time," said Aslan.

*C.S. Lewis, Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

“He Who Has Eyes”

O’ my beloved, my precious bride, do you see me?

It is my face you see in front of you...

My face in the warm sun,  
My face in the ice storm...

My face in the soft rain,  
My face in the hurricane...

My face in the cool stream,  
My face in the whelming flood...

My face in the fireplace,  
My face in the forest fire...

My face in the sunrise,  
My face in the midnight sky...

Yes, it is even...

My face in the celebrity,  
My face in the orphan...

My face in the victim,  
My face in the perpetrator...

My face in the love starved,  
My face in the prostitute...

My face in the betrayed,  
My face in the traitor...

My face in those you judge,  
My face in the mirror...

For My Grace is sufficient for all of these,  
My Power strong enough to go anywhere,  
My Love deep enough to redeem ALL.

I bled a river on the cross for the ENTIRE world,  
And I rose again to bring ALL to Myself.

*Dale Eben, Living Stones Service, 3-1-06*

I am the light of the world.

*John 8:12 (ESV)*

God comes to us disguised as our life.

*Paul D'Arcy, quoted in Everything Belongs by Richard Rohr*

You must utterly believe that the circumstances of your life, that is, every minute of your life, as well as the whole course of your life—anything, yes, everything that happens—have all come to you by His will and by His permission. You must utterly believe that everything that has happened to you is from God and is exactly what you need. . .

*Jeanne Guyon, Experiencing the Depths of Jesus*

If a man believes and knows God, he can no longer ask, What is the meaning of my life? But by believing he actually lives the meaning of his life, the meaning of his creatureliness, of his individuality, in the limits of his creatureliness and individuality and in the fallibility of his existence, in the sin in which he is involved and of which daily and hourly he is guilty; yet he also lives it with the aid which is daily and hourly imparted to him through God's interceding for him, in spite of him, and without him deserving it.

*Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline*

When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord. . . . Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ it shall be said to them, ‘Children of the living God.’ . . . Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor [trouble] a

door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.”

*Hosea 1:2, 1:10, 2:14-15 (ESV)*

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