

## Stump the Preacher: Imagining God

**Micah 6: 6-8; Psalm 119: 129-136; Matthew 13: 44-52; Colossians 2:2-3**

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Ian: I have a great idea for what we could do one Sunday morning with the kids. Let's take some of the stories in the bible and re-write them so that they end God's way.

Cathy: Hmm. The stories that Joanne read this morning told us a lot about God and God's way. But I do agree that there are some stories in the Bible that are very sad or very confusing. There are stories in the Bible about people who came very close to God. And, even though those people came close to God, some of their stories don't end God's way. Your idea is very interesting; but how...

Ian: Let's take the story of Peter denying Jesus and make it so that Peter doesn't deny Jesus. When Peter denied knowing Jesus he felt so guilty. Maybe he could have said something like, "Yes, I know him but I cannot do the amazing miracles that he did. I do not have his power." See, God's way!



Cathy: It sounds like sometimes we have to have courage to do things God's way. Do you have any other ideas?

Ian: How about the story of Judas. What if Judas didn't betray Jesus for silver? What if he was still a friend to Jesus? What if Judas went out to get more bread for the supper and the Roman Soldiers saw him leave? They must have known that Judas was Jesus' friend and so when he went out for bread they guessed that Jesus was in the room. Then Judas would have led the soldiers to Jesus by accident. Judas wouldn't have felt so guilty.

Cathy: I see. If the story had ended God's way, I wonder if Judas would have gone on to do the amazing, faith-filled work that Peter did. Do any other stories come to mind for you?

Ian: What if in the story of Samson and Delilah they actually fell in love and Delilah didn't betray Samson. Maybe because they loved each other so much they could work together to help the Israelites and the Philistines find a way to work out their problems without a war. War is terrible. With war there is

death, disease, sadness, violence and anger. God's way is all about love. Maybe love could have helped things turn out God's way.

Cathy: That sounds a little like the reading from Colossians. Instead of fighting all the time God wants us to be woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God.

I think what I understand you saying is that in some of the Bible stories people make choices that are not God's way. Lots of people died in the story of Samson and Delilah—including Samson. I wonder why stories that don't end God's way are in the Bible.

Ian: Well, there are things that we can learn from the stories. Peter knew that God would forgive what he had done. Peter was still a friend of Jesus' and he kept doing Jesus' work in the world. For Judas, the story didn't work out well at all. But, the story is important because it is a story about Jesus' life.

Cathy: In Micah, it is really clear what it looks like to live God's way. In some ways it sounds so simple. Not a million different instructions—just three things:

- Seek justice
- Love Kindness
- Walk humbly with God

And then Colossians tells us that if we do this "...our minds will be confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God's great mystery. All the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are embedded in that mystery!" So then, I wonder why is it that people choose to live ways that aren't God's way.

Ian: I think that people don't understand God very well. They get distracted by things like land and money and work. Before you know it they are fighting. But even when people are fighting I think they can still find God's way.

They need to see everyone like a family. Sometimes my brother and I get angry with each other and we fight. We do mean things and hurt each other. But the thing I know is that we really love each other and we always find a way to work things out. God keeps trying to tell us that LOVE is the most important thing. If we lived God's way all the time there would be no guns and no bruises!

Cathy: That is the kind of world I want to live in. To me, it sounds like God's kingdom that Jesus talks about. I think that one of the things that we learn from these stories is that even when people come very close to God and God comes very close to them, they are still people. Living God's way is hard work for people and there are lots of distractions and challenges along the way.

Some people, like Peter, know that it is never too late to turn back to God's way. And there are other people that don't seem to know this...even in the Bible. Maybe we can see ourselves in some of these stories. Maybe we have come close to a place where everyone is living God's way. I think that I have come close sometimes when I am at camp or when I am in the Godly Play Room. Sometimes, I even feel it at home—those times when it feels like we are really woven together in a tapestry of love. To be in such a place is like a rare treasure. Jesus said:

"God's kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field for years and then accidentally found by a trespasser. The finder is ecstatic—what a find!—and proceeds to sell everything he owns to raise money and buy that field.

Ian: I wonder if we could re-write our stories so that they end God's way?  
Amen