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Transfiguration

“Trying To Figure Jesus Out”

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Luke 9

Let's start today with a funny list, written by a Sunday School child.

“What I Learned in Sunday School”

- #1. The Egyptians were all drowned in the dessert.
- #2. Afterwards, Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the ten amendments.
- #3. Solomon, one of David's sons, had three hundred wives and seven hundred porcupines.
- #4. Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.
- #5. Jesus gave the Golden Rule, which says to do one to others before they do one to you.
- #6. St. Paul cavorted to Christianity. He preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marriage.

It sounds like whoever wrote that list is still trying to figure a few things. And that's OK.

How about you? Have you got the Bible all figured out? Do you have a perfect understanding of God? How about Jesus? Would you say that you have Jesus all figured out?

You know, the longer I'm a pastor, the more I'm convinced that the church is full of people who are trying to figure Jesus out. We read Bible stories about Jesus every week here in church. We pray to him. We sing to him. We talk about him in the Creed. But there are a lot of us who still don't quite have Jesus all figured out.

Why did he do some of the things he did? Why did Jesus say some of those painfully challenging things he said? Why

doesn't Jesus do some of his miracles here, right now, in our sight? Why doesn't Jesus answer some of our prayers the way we want them answered? How does Jesus really expect us to put him first in our lives when we've never met him, or seen him? How can we be completely loyal to Jesus when, as human beings, we're so easily tempted and distracted? When is Jesus coming back? What is he waiting for?

None of us have all the answers to all of those questions, do we? We all have our questions. We all deal with uncertainties, when it comes to Jesus. Many of us here – maybe all of us here – are still trying to figure Jesus out, in certain ways.

If that's you, my message to you today is real simple. Two words. "That's OK." Here's why.

First, you're not alone. As I said, the church is full of Christians like us who still have questions and ambiguities about Christ. But what better place to bring our questions? What better place to sort out our hesitations than here? Do you know why we have all of these classes and small groups going on here at Hope? It's not just so we can pump you up with more Bible knowledge and spiritual expertise. Those classes and small groups are places where we can talk about our questions, and work through our reservations together, without judgment or embarrassment. We're all figuring Jesus out still, and if you need a place to do that in your life, you're in the right place. You're definitely not alone!

Wednesday night I led an adult class upstairs called "Today's Headlines and Your Faith." We talked about the presidential election campaign news, and the struggles we face in this country regarding immigration, and how to deal with other world religions, especially Islam. Where does God stand on all of those issues? And how does Jesus expect us

to respond to those issues, as his followers? None of us had all the perfect answers on Wednesday night, but it was good to have a place where we could bring our questions and our thoughts.

Are you trying to figure Jesus out still? You're definitely not alone!

Even in our Bible story for today, we read about how Jesus' disciples were struggling to figure him out. They hiked up on the mountaintop with Jesus; and then Peter, James, and John watched as Jesus, their friend and rabbi, suddenly started glowing. Jesus' face was altered, and the light of heaven shone from him. And then two Old Testament superheroes, Moses and Elijah, suddenly appeared standing next to Jesus, talking with him. The disciples were blown away. These men had been traveling with Jesus for a few years now, and they thought they knew him pretty well. But they'd never seen Jesus like this. They didn't know what to do, didn't know what to say.

And they weren't alone, were they? We modern-day disciples are right there with them. Like Peter and the boys up on the mountain, we all have our moments of shining clarity in our faith. But we also have our times of doubt, worry, selfishness, confusion, and question.

And that's OK. First, because we're not alone. You're not alone.

And here's the real reason that's OK. It's because Jesus has figured you out. He's God. You're not. He's all-knowing. You're not. Jesus knows you have your limitations. He knows your faith isn't perfect, and your understanding of him isn't always so solid. Jesus knows all about your day-to-day spiritual struggles, all about your family fiascos, all about

your personal faults and peccadillos. He knows all of that. Jesus knows you. He has you all figured out.

And here's the thing. He loves you anyway! Jesus is crazy about you, just as you are! He cares deeply about you, about your life, about your future, about your relationship with God and with the church. Jesus knows all of your quirky problems, and he's already taken care of your biggest, baddest problem. Jesus died on the cross, to take away your sin. He's removed, as far as the east is from the west, the sin that used to separate you from your Maker. Jesus loves you. The Bible tells you so. He loves you so much that he died for you. And you are forgiven now, saved now, welcomed by God now and forever, through simple, child-like faith in Jesus.

That's all it takes. Just say, "Lord, I believe in you. Help my unbelief." And he will. If you don't have Jesus all figured out yet, you're not alone. But rejoice with me today, because Jesus has you and me figured out. Thank the Lord! Amen.