

What If...?

Sermon notes for the sermon
Given by Rev. Dr. Gregory B. Young
On Maundy Thursday, April 21, 2011

A very good friend once asked me, "If you had your life to live over again, what would you be? Would you choose to be an ordained minister or something else?"

What if...? What if each of us had the opportunity to live life over again with the knowledge and understanding we have gained thus far? I answered my friend by saying that if I had it to do all over again I would choose to be an electrician. Over the years I have come to know that I enjoy doing many of the things that an electrician does. I then pointed out to my friend that when I started my undergraduate degree I was planning on being an engineer. I then told my friend that regardless of what I had chosen to do with my life I still would have wound up an ordained minister of the church because I believe God chose me for this. It was not my career goal but it was my vocation as I understood God moving in my life and preparing me for this position within the community of faith. What if...?

What if Adam and Eve had not eaten from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil?

What if, instead, they obeyed God's command not to eat of its fruit? Would they still be living in the Garden of Eden? Would they still be standing naked before God and enjoying a daily walk with God in the beauty of the garden? Would we even be? If God had not given Adam and Eve the freedom to choose to disobey the command not to eat the fruit then we would not be at this table today.

There would have been no need for our salvation because we would not need saving. God did give to Adam and Eve the ability to choose to follow the desires of their own hearts; it is part of what it means to be created in God's image.

Adam and Eve did choose to eat the fruit from the tree of the Knowledge of

Good and Evil, and here we find ourselves today, eating the Passover of our faith. What if...?

What if God, instead of saving Noah and his family, chose to destroy the entire human race with the flood? What if God had not chosen to save them and instead let them drown with the rest of the poor souls? What if God chose not to provide the ram on Mount Moriah so that Abraham would have had to sacrifice his only son Isaac in obedience to God's command? Would that have brought an end to the story of redemption. Or, what if Moses had chosen not to investigate the phenomenon that we know as the burning bush? What if he had seen the strange light on the mountain top and continued on his business of caring for Jethro's flocks? Better yet, what if God chose not to speak to Moses from the burning bush? What if God either didn't hear the cries of the Israelites slaves in Egypt or chose not to listen to their cries for freedom? Would the story of salvation ended there? What if...?

What if instead of following through with his God given mission Jesus chose not to go ahead with the plan and ran from the Garden of Gethsemane before he could be arrested? What if the Israelite ruling council could not find any evidence to bring Jesus up on charges and they were forced to release him? What if Pontius Pilate chose not to give in to the pressure of the crowd and instead sent Barabbas to be crucified and freed Jesus? What if...?

What if, instead of coming into this sanctuary today you chose to do something else? What if you went about the business of your own life either never knowing or never accepting the gift of life that God offers to all at this table? There were many paths the story of our salvation could have taken over the centuries and today we find ourselves written into the story. Today, whatever it was that brought us to this sanctuary and to this table, we find ourselves standing with all of those who have responded to the call of God. We hear the invitation to come and join in the celebration of the redemption of humanity. What if we had chosen not to come?