

## **The Face of God - 7/12/20**

Oh my goodness, it sure is good to see you all.

I asked David to read that scripture passage from Genesis because it captures one of the happiest moments in the entire Bible, and I knew it was the same kind of happy I'd be feeling right now, standing up here, looking at you.

The story he read to you is about two people seeing each other who haven't seen each other face to face in a long long time.

Like all of us.

It's the story of Jacob, returning back home after long years away, to see his twin brother Esau.

There's a whole lot of back story and complications, too, you can check it all out in the first 32 chapters of Genesis.

But the moment I love, the moment we just heard, is when Jacob and Esau see each other after all these years, and Jacob says these beautiful words:

“to see you is like seeing the face of God.”

That's how I feel right now -- to see YOU is like seeing the face of God.

Granted, the face of God with a mask on,

but still -- you look absolutely divine to me, all of you.

There is a joy in seeing each other that is something holy.

We've all been experiencing it.

You go to Stop and Shop, and in the produce section there's a friend you haven't seen in person for months --

and you greet each other with that same thrill of delight that Jacob and Esau felt.

I saw our Bob Evans there the other day -- people around me must have thought I was nuts as I shrieked with delight and barreled over with my cart.

And when our teenagers showed up here ten days ago,

to build benches together and raise money for ASP,

I was near tears just from the happiness of seeing high schoolers again.

So, indeed, to see you all here is something holy, something wonderful.

It IS like seeing the face of God.

The last time we were together as a worshipping community was March 15.

And, at the risk of tremendous understatement,

these four months here at church have been something of an adventure.

Particularly in the area of technological exploration.

This past week, for instance,

Marcia and I ventured into the world of green screens in order to make our

Vacation Bible School videos.

For those of you, like us, new to this,

that just means that you make a video of yourself standing in front of a wall

which has to be entirely green.

And then when you edit the video, you can add in a picture of anything you

want,

and wherever the green is, the picture fills in.

So, Marcia tacked a green tablecloth to the wall,

made a video in front of it, and I could then put Marcia in front of the Eiffel

Tower, on the Great Wall of China, in the Roman Colosseum - whatever.

It's pretty cool.

Expect to see us having way too much fun with this in upcoming videos.

You can also at some point expect to see the Greenfield Hill bloopers and outtakes reel from our earlier, *less* successful efforts...

like the Church School video we made at the Widmers' farm, in which Lenny the lamb starts eating the tripod --

or the worship video where David's cell phone starts ringing, midway through his sermon.

We're learning, we're learning.

All of us here have learned a lot, no doubt.

Like how to dress for Zoom calls --

barefoot in shorts works fine.

And how to color coordinate your mask with your outfit --

should I go blue floral today or pink stripes?

All of us have learned a lot.

But maybe the most important thing we've learned is what I heard expressed by a store owner last week.

At one of the places that's helped us supply meals to deliver, Fred's on Black Rock,

Fred and I were reflecting on Covid life, and he said,  
“I guess the good thing is what we’ve learned, right?  
That we really need to *be* with each other,  
not just on social media or our phones, but really *with* each other.  
It took losing that to realize how much we need it.”

In other words -- there is that about being with each other that is holy.  
Like seeing the face of God.

There is a lot more still ahead of us, clearly.  
Still a lot more masking and distancing and everything we need to do to  
show care for one another and our community.  
Still a long time before we can greet one another with hugs,  
or pack this church to the rafters again.  
But the day will come, the day will come.

What I want us to hang onto, as we journey towards that day,  
is that sense of joy that seeing one another has brought.  
I want us always to remember that moment

when you saw someone in person that you hadn't seen for a long time,  
and it felt like seeing the face of God.

Because the truth is, that's what God created us for.

God *created* us to find joy in each other.

God gave us, in the words of the Apostle Paul, "eyes of the heart"  
to see each other with delight and to recognize each other as sisters and  
brothers.

God created us for connection --

and to have learned that is something we need now not to un-learn.

Whether it is to find deeper joy in the people you love and know,

or, beyond that circle, to *truly* see the face of God

in those who look differently, love differently, believe differently.

God created us to see the face of God in all.

At the end of our junior pilgrim fellowship youth group meetings --

which one day we will have again --

at the end of each of those, we always say this blessing to each other:

*May you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet,*

*May everyone you meet see the face of Christ in you.*

So, in the joy of seeing you, I'll end this with those same words.

May you see the face of God in everyone you meet,  
and may everyone you meet see the face of God in you.

Amen.