

“JESUS INCOGNITO”

VIDEO

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnOPu0_YWhw

On Friday, January 12, 2007, a young violinist in a t shirt and a ball cap began to play at a busy Washington D.C. Metro subway station. He will play 6 pieces of classical music in 43 minutes.

Almost 1100 people will walk past him. Only 27 will even pause for a moment or drop a dollar into the open violin case at his feet...

They did not know that the young man in their midst was Joshua Bell, one of the greatest concert violinists in the world.

The whole experiment was put together by the Washington Post newspaper as a test; to see if in an incongruous context, ordinary people would recognize genius in their midst...less than 2% did.

I. Introduction

A. Joshua Bell Incognito

1. This is an amazing video about a world famous concert violinist who goes incognito. He dresses up like a regular guy. He leaves the big stage of Carnegie Hall and goes among ordinary people.

His instrument is a handcrafted Stradivarius violin, made in 1713; he sold his \$2m Stradivarius for this one; price 3 ½ million dollars!

People who knew who he was would shell out several hundred dollars to sit 200 feet away from him in a concert hall; but here he is 2 or 3 feet away performing for free; and at the end there was only \$32 in the open violin case at his feet. BUT WHO KNEW?

2. And that's the point! This video is a parable of the Lord Jesus Christ! The Son of God who left the big stage of heaven, dressed up like one of us, and came to earth to play the greatest song man has ever heard; but so few recognized Him or paid Him any mind. He was there among them; but HE CAME INCOGNITO!

John 1:26-27

John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."

3. God had come down into the crowd; but they did not recognize Him!

a. One of the great Christian writers, C.S. Lewis said this...

"We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito. And the incognito is not always easy to penetrate. The real labor is to remember to attend, to come awake, and still more, to remain awake."

C.S. Lewis

4. Let me introduce you to the God of the Bible who *hides* Himself in the midst of His *revelation* of Himself.

a. The great 13th century saint, Thomas Aquinas wrote...

"He is the elusive God, the evasive God, the hidden God."

5. 300 years later, Martin Luther, the Father of the great Protestant Reformation would base his entire theology on the **"Deus Absconditus"**; which is Latin for "the hidden God", meaning "the apparent absence of God from those who seek Him." (Encyclopedia.com)

a. He meant that God may be most present even though we may not recognize Him because He doesn't appear as we think He should.

"Martin Luther steadfastly proclaimed a theology of a God hidden beyond human reason or senses...a God who seems to contradict His revelation of Himself."

Laura Welker

6. The God of the Bible consistently comes incognito into the world of His creatures; He reveals Himself, but yet remains hidden; and He remains hidden, even when He reveals Himself!

a. Professor Richard Muller explained Luther's theology this way...

“God is revealed in His hiddenness and hidden in His revelation.”

Dr. Richard A. Muller

7. Let’s take a trip through the Bible to see how true this is...

II. God Revealed Yet Hidden

A. Theophanies In the Old Testament

1. Bible scholars tell us there are many “Theophanies” of Christ in the Old Testament;

Theophany

An appearance of God to men in the Old Testament.

- God appeared to Joshua as the “Captain of the Lord’s Host” to Joshua but Joshua didn’t recognize Him as God
- God appeared to Gideon at the threshing floor, but as the “Angel of the Lord”
- God was present with Jacob when he fled from his home...

Then Jacob woke up and said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place and I wasn’t even aware of it.

Genesis 28:16

Another version says: “Wow, God is with me and I didn’t even know it!”

(God is with us tonight; but some of you might not even know it)

- Later, Jacob wrestles all night with a man, but in the morning realizes he was wrestling with God!

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

Genesis 32:30 KJV

(How many of US think we’re only wrestling with men when we are really wrestling with GOD?)

2. Time and again God reveals Himself incognito; He reveals Himself but remains hidden at the same time! This pattern continues with...

B. Jesus Incognito in the New Testament

1. Consider His birth; the God of heaven has come to earth; but how many come to the manger? THREE!

a. Here is the very CREATOR of the universe; taking flesh upon Himself and coming into physical contact with His CREATION.

b. But He is incognito. He hides Himself as a newborn babe.

2. When He is 8 days old, Mary and Joseph take Him to the Temple at Jerusalem; the very center of the Jewish religion; with 100's of people all around; and HOW MANY RECOGNIZE HIM? Two! Just TWO. (Simeon and Anna)

a. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah of the Prophet Malachi; the One who would "come suddenly to His temple" and burn like a refiner's fire; but He comes incognito; the son of peasants; an 8 day old baby; and even though He was revealing Himself, they didn't recognize Him.

3. Move on. He grows up in the home of Joseph and Mary; can you imagine having the Son of God in one of your bedrooms? Eating at your table? But at 12 He goes missing and His parents started fussing at Him!

**Why are you looking for Me? Didn't you know I must be about My Father's business?
Luke 2:49**

(Translation: Why are you looking for God? He's not the one who is lost!)

4. Jesus is among them, unrecognized for 30 years; then we find Him in the crowd at one of John's baptismal services, where John

**"There is one among you that you do not know..."
John 1:26**

5. He launches His ministry, works miracles, becomes well known among the Galileans and the outcasts; then He goes back to His hometown...

“Isn’t this just the carpenter’s son?” And they were offended at Him...

Mark 6:3

- a. Those who knew Him best honored Him the least!
- b. He had been right there among them for 30 years; and they still didn’t know Who He was!
- c. And some who knew who He was later doubted who He was!

6. The great John the Baptist was the first man to identify Him in public as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. But when he was thrown in prison, even John began to doubt Him!

“Are the One we’ve been expecting or do we need to look for someone else?”

Luke 7:20

- a. How many miss God because He’s in a t shirt and a ball cap?
- b. How many doubt God when He doesn’t act like we think God should act?
- c. How many of us are like John; we know who He is when we’re all on the seashore; but we begin to doubt who He is when we’re going through trouble!

7. But this was Martin Luther’s great point: God hides Himself, even within His own revelation, so that faith can become *true* faith!

“God hides Himself in contradiction to His given revelation in order to cause faith to become true faith.”

Martin Luther

- a. We know God saves; but faith only becomes true faith when He seems to not be saving us.
- b. We know God heals, but faith becomes real faith when God goes incognito and does not seem to be healing us.

**EVERONE KNEW JOSH BELL ON STAGE AT CARNEGIE HALL...
BUT WHO KNOWS WHO HE IS ON A PLATFORM IN A TRAIN STATION?**

8. This is a big deal! It is incredible that the entire nation of Israel missed their Messiah because He came incognito!

a. **ISRAEL MISSED HER MESSIAH BECAUSSE THE LION OF JUDAH CAME INCOGNITO AS THE LAMB OF GOD!**

b. Think of it this way: It would take very LITTLE faith to recognize Messiah as the Lion of Judah; but it would take TRUE faith to be able to recognize Him dying as a Lamb!

C. Jesus Incognito After the Resurrection

1. Even after the resurrection, Jesus came among them and they did not recognize Him!

a. He came walking on the water in the storm and they thought He was a ghost.

b. Here at the Garden Tomb on the morning of the resurrection, Mary thought he was the gardener!

11 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; 12 and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. 13 And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

14 When she had said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Why are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

John 20

2. Later, He appears to His disciples; stands in front of them; but Thomas won't believe unless he puts his hand into the wounds!

3. But the most puzzling of all is when He appeared to 2 of His disciples on the Road to Emmaus...

13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

Luke 24:13-16 NKJV

a. A 7 mile walk with Jesus and they didn't know who He was!

4. Their complaint was they thought Jesus was the Messiah but His defeat at the Cross proved them wrong!

a. They recognized Him when He preached, when He healed, when He cast out devils...but NOT when He suffered on the Cross!

Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Luke 24:25-27

b. Like many today, they had only underlined the "good parts" of their Bibles, where Messiah would come in power and glory; they never recognized Him as the Passover Lamb of Exodus or the suffering servant in Isaiah~

5. We are living in a day when the church has no theology for suffering. For us, God only seems truly present when we are in church, or when all is well. The more trouble we are in, the less we believe God is with us.

6. We speak often of God's presence; we love to be in His presence; we know He is always present, especially in our worship services! But do you know there is a place in the Bible where it says God is 'VERY present'?"

God is our refuge and our fortress; a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we shall not fear!

Psalm 46:1-2

7. Did you know that when you're in trouble, God is "very present"?"

8. Back to Emmaus; when did Jesus finally make Himself known to these dull disciples?

Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

Luke 24:30-31 NKJV

- He was visible but they knew Him not
- But as soon as they knew who He was, He went invisible
- Once you can see God “in the breaking of the bread”, you no longer need His visible presence to know He is there!

9. This was their testimony...

Then they told them what had happened on the road and how He had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:35

III. Communion

A. God is Hidden in Plain Sight

1. The Cross of Christ shows God is never more present than when He seems most absent.

- Never was the very heart of God more revealed to the human race
- Stripped naked; rejected by man; pierced; then LIFTED UP HIGH for all to see
- The greatest revelation of God was on Calvary’s hill

And yet...

- How many see the Cross and fail to see God?
- How many look but cannot see?

“Man hides his own things in order to conceal them; God hides His own things in order to reveal them.”

Martin Luther

2. And so it is with Holy Communion; the Table of the Lord.

3. Jesus said He would be with us until the end of the world. Where? In the Eucharist, the holy table of the Lord's Supper...

“The most profound hiding place of God is in the Eucharist, the most strange and most obscure hiding place of all, this sacrament the Apostle John called, ‘hidden manna’.”
Blaise Pascal

As we receive today, remember...

God comes incognito. He may be most present when He seems most absent!