

# Belief Is Easy\*

\*Relatively

WONDERFUL MERCY CHURCH – SEPTEMBER 16, 2018

# What is God Doing?



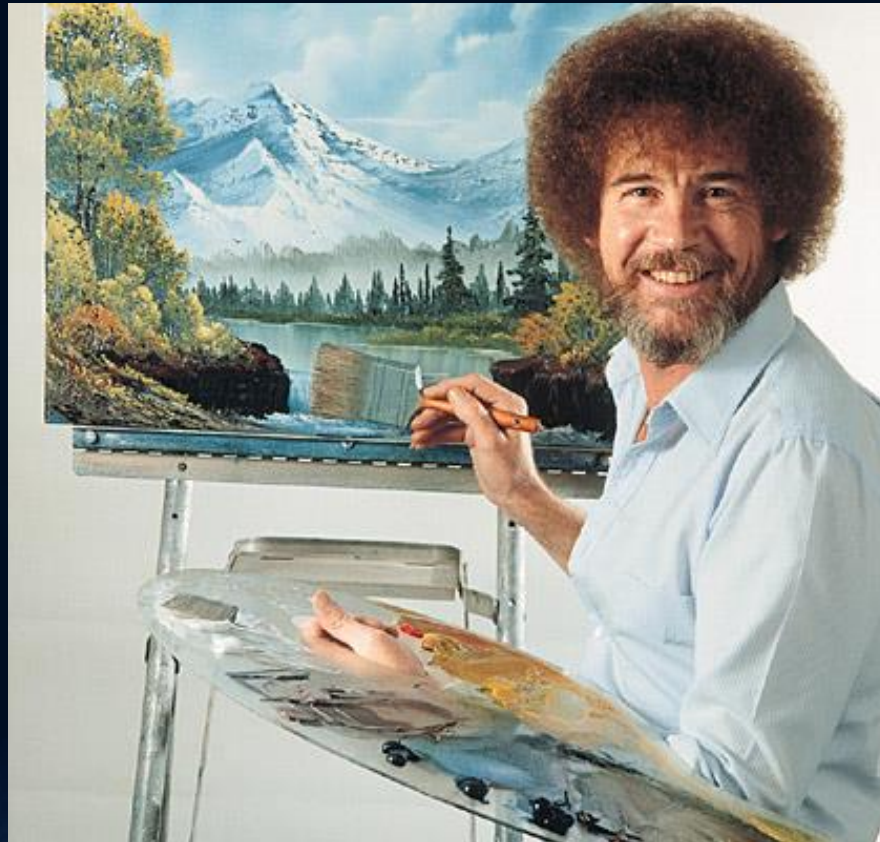
No. 5, 1948, by Jackson Pollack

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# What is God Doing?

- “We certainly don’t need any to add any happy trees.”



# What is God Doing?

- “We certainly don’t need any to add any happy trees.”
- We must not be tempted to apply our ideas of order and correctness what God is doing.

# Why This Story?

- We are all susceptible to attack and deception
- Most, if not all leaders at WMC, have, at one time or another, felt the same way
- We are not meant to struggle alone
- Our desire to “correct” God is not new or unique.

# Mark 8:27-30 (Passion)

Then Jesus and his disciples walked to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way, he posed this question to his disciples: "Who do the people say that I am?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptizer, others say Elijah the prophet, and still others say you must be one of the prophets."

He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter spoke up, saying, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!"

Then he warned them not to breathe a word of this to anyone.

# Who Do People Say Jesus Is?

- From our perspective, Peter's answer seems easy and obvious. Is it?
- Barna Poll taken in 2015, asked, "I believe Jesus was..."
  - God: 56%
  - Only a spiritual or religious leader: 26%
  - Not sure: 18%
- Who do YOU say Jesus is?

## Mark 8: 31-33 (Passion)

From then on, Jesus began to tell his disciples that he, the Son of Man, was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer great injustice from the elders, leading priests, and religious scholars. He also explained that he would be killed and three days later be raised to life again. Jesus opened his heart and spoke freely with his disciples, explaining all these things to them.

Then Peter took him aside and rebuked him. But Jesus turned around, and glancing at all of the other disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, "Get out of my sight, Satan! For your heart is not set on God's plan but man's!"



# Peter Rebukes Jesus

- Rebuke: express sharp disapproval or criticism of (someone) because of their behavior or actions.
- And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." (NRSV) Matthew 16:22
- Do we rebuke Jesus?
- When are our hearts set on our own plan and not God's plan?

## Mark 8:34-38 (Passion)

Jesus summoned the crowd, along with his disciples, and had them gather around. And he said to them: "If you truly want to follow me, you should at once completely disown your own life. And you must be willing to share my cross and experience it as your own, as you continually surrender to my ways. For if you let your life go for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, you will continually experience true life.

## Mark 8:34-38 (Passion)

But if you choose to keep your life for yourself, you will forfeit what you try to keep. For what use is it to gain all the wealth and power of this world, with everything it could offer you, at the cost of your own life? And what could be more valuable to you than your own soul? So among the unfaithful and sinful people living today, if you are ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of you when he makes his appearance with his holy messengers in the glorious splendor of his Father!”

# The Hard Part

- Jesus lays it out for the larger crowd: give up your life for true life or keep your life, which leads to death.
- Knowing, as Peter did, that Jesus is the messiah, the savior, God's son, turns out to be a *relatively* easy part of the process.

“For it was only through this wonderful grace that we believed in him.”

Eph 2:8(a) (Passion)



# The Hard Part

- Setting our hearts of the things of God, not man, is the hard part.
- Jesus tells us, our part is to let go, to surrender, to share his cross and to do that immediately and continuously.  
“If you truly want to follow me, you should at once completely disown your own life....and share my cross... as you continually surrender to my ways.” (Mark 8:34)

# What Do You Need to Let Go Of?

- Are there places in your life where your heart is not set on God's plan but man's?
- Are there some jewels along the beach you know aren't for you, but you want them anyway?
- Ask the Father, What do I need to let go of?

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