

# ***One of Us***

**A message for All Faiths**

**Unitarian Congregation**

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I first saw the image on the cover of your order of service when I was a freshman at my Catholic University.

Although I didn't see the actual shroud, the lecture and presentation caught my curiosity. I remember

seeing this particular image and wondering, “Who is that?” “Could it be Jesus?” Of course, I wondered in my head. Had I questioned that this was in fact Jesus I may have been expelled or at least labeled a blasphemer. What you are seeing is the top portion of the shroud of Turin. The Shroud of Turin is a length of linen cloth bearing the negative image of a man. Some believe the image depicts Jesus of Nazareth and the fabric is the burial

shroud in which he was wrapped after crucifixion. Historical and scientific evidence points to it being a medieval creation. It is first securely attested in 1390, when a local bishop wrote that the shroud was a forgery and that an unnamed artist had confessed, and radiocarbon dating of a sample of the fabric is consistent with this date.

For me, the reasonable evidence pointed to a man and this led to my

exploration of Jesus being a man,  
being human, one of us. How  
human was Jesus? Was he really  
someone who lived a life like ours,  
or was his considerably different?  
Jesus was a dude, and Jesus looked  
like a normal dude, right? So many  
of the pictures of Jesus, he's very  
tall, nice jaw – just very rugged,  
European features. We don't know  
what Jesus looks like, except for it  
tells us in Isaiah 53:2 that “He had  
no beauty or majesty to attract us to

him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”

I don’t know what he looked like.

He may have looked like George

Burns after all. I don’t know. He

may not have been tall. He may

have been short. He may not have

had long, flowing, rocker dude, drag

queen, Jesus hair. He may have had

a thinning, receding hairline. I don’t

know.

What we do know is that he was a carpenter, so he may have been in fairly decent shape – calluses on his hands from swinging a hammer.

There were no power tools in that day, so he was a manual laborer. He walked a lot, so he may have been lean and thin and rugged. But if you've seen the pictures, he tends to have very long hair with hair gel and a blow dry. Wears a dress. Open toed sandals. Listens to a lot of Elton John. That kind of thing.

And when we're talking about Jesus' appearance, we're talking about someone who looked very much like an average, normal, blue-collar construction worker. So, if you would have looked at Jesus, he looked very normal. He's a guy going to work with a lunchbox and calluses on his hands. He's in his early 30's.

So he grew up. He started off as a little baby – needed to be changed and fed – and then became a toddler

who knew how to walk. And  
became a little boy who learned how  
to read and write. And then when he  
got older, his voice dropped in  
puberty and he grew a beard, and  
then he became a man. And yeah, he  
grew physically. It says he also  
grew spiritually. He had to read his  
Bible and pray and go to religious  
meetings like we do. And yeah,  
Jesus grew physically and  
spiritually, and in so far as his  
reputation was concerned. So if you



would have seen him, he looked like a normal human being. And the truth is too, the Bible talks about many aspects of his humanity.

Jesus had a mom, Mary, and the Bible says in a few places that he really did love and care for his mother. He also, we are told, obeyed his parents, which may be an argument that he is in fact divine.

Any kid who obeys his parents may in fact be a miracle. And that Jesus obeyed his parents. He also had two

brothers, James and Jude – so kid  
brothers he wrestled with and such.  
He went to the equivalent of church  
services where he worshiped God.  
He got hungry and he ate. He got  
thirsty and he drank. The Bible says  
he also didn't know everything. He  
asked a lot of questions. “Hey, what  
happened here?” and “What about  
this?” and “Where's this?” And he  
asked questions.

It says that there were two sisters,  
Mary and Martha, and their brother,

Lazarus, and these are some of Jesus' best friends. He hangs out at their house a lot; eats with them. It says that he loved Mary and Martha. He loved Lazarus. And what this shows is that Jesus had friendships with men that he loved, and he had friendships with women that he loved.

Jesus also, though he was not a parent or a father, kids loved him, and he loved kids, and they came to him. And apparently Jesus too was a

fun guy to hang out with, ‘cause he kept getting invited to parties and holidays and such. That was the big accusation against him – “He’s a friend of drunkards and gluttons, and every time we see him, he’s at a party.” Well he went to the parties, but he didn’t get drunk, and he didn’t eat too much, and he didn’t end up with a lampshade on his head on the karaoke machine.

People liked to hang out with him, and they’d invite him over to dinner

and,”Hey, we’re having a party.

Let’s call Jesus.” And I think one of the reasons the religious folks hated him is ‘cause they never got invited to any parties ‘cause they were no fun at all, and that’s the way religious people tend to be.

Historically, the ancient heretics, that’s us, said he was human. The Jehovah’s Witnesses say this –

“He’s a great guy, but not God.”

Mormons say that “he was a man who became God,” so they’re

denying the full divinity of Jesus as the only God. Liberal Christians – emergent Christians who follow in their steps and also the Da Vinci Code – really stress the humanity of Jesus, but denied the divinity of Jesus.

The result is, “Jesus is a great guy. Jesus is a guru. Jesus is a spiritual teacher. Jesus is a liberator. He’s a cynic sage. He’s a wise man. He has miracles and powers, or maybe he’s

a magician, or maybe he is some extraterrestrial, but he's not God."

I'll tell you one aspects of Jesus you may not have known. The first is that he was funny. Now some of you have never heard this. You've been in the wrong church. You've been told that Jesus was not funny. He was very religious and serious, and I think that's funny. Jesus had a sense of humor. Now not all people see this. G.K. Chesterton, for example – a good author with a book called

Orthodoxy – the last line of the book, he says, “The one thing that Jesus hid from us was his mirth,” meaning his sense of humor.

Frederick Nietzsche thought the same thing. The great Atheist philosopher said, “It’s too bad Jesus didn’t learn how to laugh.” One of the reasons he rejected Jesus is he thought Jesus was boring. Do you really think that Jesus went camping with 12 guys for three years and never told a joke or never laughed at



one? Any of you guys ever been camping with other guys? That's basically what they did. How do you hang out with 12 guys, mainly blue-collar, for three years and not tell a joke or laugh at one?

This extraordinary human being, this Jesus of Nazareth, offers us the hope of redemption when we face life's existential questions. Our Unitarian Universalist faith and seven principles embrace the Christian story and are inspired by

the love and hope Jesus offers. We are enriched by this life affirming human's message embodied in his spiritual wisdom and teachings. This is true even for those of us who do not identify as Christian. UUs need to acknowledge our faith stems from Christian roots. We also must acknowledge our centuries old struggle about the nature and personhood of Jesus. We have from our beginnings in sixteenth century

Transylvania accepted the unity of God but not the Trinity.

Carol sang What if God was one of us this morning. About a month ago Carol and I had a conversation about the lyrics. I mean the song calls God a slob. I remember telling Carol that that is true. Jesus was human and struggled with the same things we do. Life gets messy, gets sloppy, and yes there are times when we, and Jesus, become slob. Jesus is human. The man pictured on the

cover of your order of service is human.

UUUs may view Jesus as a moral exemplar, practicing the compassion, generosity, and mercy that he preached. In his own life and in stories like the Good Shepherd and the Good Samaritan, Jesus calls us to connect: to transcend pride and selfishness and choose instead to love and serve, to do good, and to care for each other.

For some, Jesus is a prophetic leader  
and an instrument of the divine.

They may or may not believe Jesus  
was the son of God or was  
resurrected but share with Christians  
a conviction that his witness has the  
spiritual power to redeem mistakes  
and save lives. Many describe a  
personal relationship with him that  
strengthens and inspires. Jesus calls  
us to discover new life and truth by  
following him.

Others view Jesus as a reformer and dissident, an underdog and ally. He was executed as a political criminal because of his teachings, but his life made an impact, then and now. He called out injustice in his own community and in the government. He stood with and spoke up for the most vulnerable, and he challenged his followers to feed the hungry and visit the imprisoned. Jesus calls us to transform, to resist the unjust systems that divide us, and reshape

them for good. That sounds like one  
of us.

May it be so.