

Sermon: July 24, 2011

"Inadequate??"

Solomon is the king of Israel ... and the Lord asks him: "What do you need? ... what do you want?"
He responds ... I just want a good mind and a discerning heart ... so, when I govern my people, I will do what is
best for them ... that I will always know the difference between good and evil.

In a way ---- God is surprised.

Solomon doesn't ask for riches or stuff ... he simply wants a good mind and a good heart.

Isn't this what we want from folks who govern and lead us??

Please ... when you govern ... when you make decisions ----- no politics, no selfishness ... just do your
job with a "discerning spirit and a good heart."

"HEAR I AM, LORD ... SEND ME ... I WILL DO THE RIGHT THING!!"

I'm thinking, too, about a passage in the 2nd lesson for today:

*"We know that all things work together for good ... for those who love God ...
who are called according to his purpose ..."*

Do you buy this? Do "all things work together for good"???

**Tell this to the people of Oslo, Norway ... in the wake of 90+ people being murdered.

**Tell this to the parents of a high school student ... killed by a "hit and run" driver.

**Tell this to the retired electrician ... who is afraid of his modest 401K ... if our leaders can't figure out
and work together as we come closer to financial collapse.

It's easy to say "all things work together for good" when things are going well for you.

But when your life is in disarray ... where do you turn??

This is why we are here. Jesus says in the gospel for today ----- "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in
search of fine pearls ..."

That's me!! Always in search. Every day is a search ----- for stuff, for accomplishments, for something
that'll make me happy.

And then you find the ONE PEARL ... and it's not what we expect.

The pearl is spiritual ... it's inside of us. You can see it on a person's face ... you feel it in here ...
it's a flicker of hope.

Do you ever feel just plain *inadequate*???

As a provider? ... a friend? ... a parent? ... husband or wife?

As a care-taker? ... coach? ... teacher? ... pastor? ... leader? ... or simply as a person???

You try ... you give it your best ... but inside ----- you don't feel "good enough"???

No matter how strong or "together" we may be ... I'm sure we all have feelings of inadequacy.

You can do 10 things in a row right ... and then you make one mistake ... and the "mistake" is all you think
about. 50 people can like you and admire you ... and then one nay-sayer comes along ... and who gets all your
attention? ----- the one person who doesn't like you!@!!

This is when God *picks us up!!*

'Here I am, Lord ... send me ...'

In life ... all we can do ... is LAY IT ON THE LINE every day. Give it our best.

Like Solomon ----- ask the good Lord to give us a good spirit, a discerning heart ... look life right in the face &
give it our best shot!!

Speaking of feeling inadequate.

I'm sitting in a room at the police station ... with a young mother ... whose 5 month old baby has just died.
She died in her mom's arms.

I feel like I'm in the middle of a sad "Lifetime" made for television movie ... airing during the Christmas season.
But ... this is no movie ... it's real life.

The mom was raised in an orphanage ... came to this country when she was adopted. She is estranged from her family and the baby's father. She was renting a room in someone's house.
She has no money ... and nowhere to live.

After a while ... I say to her ----- "We need to do something for your baby ... she deserves to be buried with grace and dignity ..."

"But ..." the mom responds ... "I have nothing ---- no money ... nowhere to go ..."

I'm thinking about the manger ... Mary and Joseph ... the star of Bethlehem ... the shepherds ...
I see the sign in my office: "It will never be the same ... but it'll be ok ..."

The love bucket.

"We're all in this together."

"Here I am, Lord ... SEND ME."

Yes, as an individual ... I AM VERY INADEQUATE.

But ... there is more.

I, like you ... am "one of God's children." We are part of a community on LaGrange Road.
Each of us is one "little person" ... but we are tied together ... thanks to the majesty of God's spirit,
and the gift of our shared human spirit.

Yes, we are often inadequate ... we are who we are ... but somehow ---- God uses our often-tattered humanity
to make a difference in this crazy world.

This morning ... as we worship ... this young mother is meeting with a funeral director.

I don't have to tell you who it is ... you know ...

I was a bit apologetic when I called to ask Mark and Eddie to help me with this situation.

Their response: "Don ... this is why God puts us here ... this is what life is all about ..."

"Here I am, Lord ... send me ..."

This morning ... there is a little "5-month-old angel" out there ...

A broken mother ... who is no longer alone ...

A Scandinavian city is in shock ...

"We are all God's children ..."

This is the "pearl" we are all looking for ...

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*(*on August 1 ... little Gianna was buried ... thanks to the generosity of a caring funeral home named "Colonial" ... the caring of a cemetery named "Good Shepherd" ... and a local church's love bucket ...)*