

Advent 2 – December 6, 2020 Are You Good Enough?

Based on Mark 1:1-8

Prayer:

I am not worthy! I am not good enough. I don't have the right stuff. There is no way I am capable of doing that. I don't have the right gifts. I'm pretty ordinary, there is no way I can accomplish such a thing.

Self doubt is a significant barrier to our sense of value and worth. Unfortunately, that is all too common. It doesn't help when we are not supported in our efforts, when friends, and even family ridicule our dreams. "You want to be a what? You don't have the intellect for that." Or a comment like "you are not motivated enough to do that."

That is when, as my wife Lenore would say, "**you feel like a squished pea.**" The wind is taken out of your sails and you are cast adrift in a sea of frustration and despair.

On the banks of the Jordan, John is proclaiming the good news of a better way to all that would believe. We understand from today's message that crowds of people gathered in the Judean countryside – "**people from the whole Judean countryside and "all" the people of Jerusalem were going out to him.**" This must have been quite a spectacle.

To the crowds and according to Mark, John announces that Jesus is coming, the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit, not water. And John exclaims, "**I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.**" Despite doing God's work of salvation, of bringing a new vision of hope into his time, he, John is not worthy of doing something so basic as untying Jesus' sandals.

We know in part that the author's intent of this gospel was to remind his readers how great Jesus would be. He would have the authority to speak on God's behalf. He would proclaim justice, peace and equality, he would live love.

Apart from the theological underpinnings of this story, it is perhaps no surprise that Jesus would hold up John's ministry and mission. From the third chapter of Matthew we read the story of Jesus' baptism.

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

Righteousness in this case means proper conduct, the “correct observance.” It was right that John should be the one to baptize Jesus, since he was called by God to proclaim that the kingdom was coming near to everyone. Despite John’s feeling less than worthy, Jesus knew the opposite was true.

Rosa Parks: Wouldn’t give up her seat. (Picture One)

Tired from a full day’s work, Rosa Parks boarded a Montgomery bus on December 1, 1955 and forever became one of the inspirational people who changed the world. When she refused to obey the driver’s order to give up her seat and move to the back of the bus, so a white person could sit there, she was arrested for civil disobedience. Parks’ act of defiance, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott that followed, are recognized as pivotal moments in the “American” (my emphasis) civil rights movement.¹

I wonder whether or not Rosa thought much about being worthy or just decided at the moment she would resist authority when she was sitting on that bus 65 years ago?

Terry Fox (Picture Two)

Everyone in Canada and hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world know of Terry’s story. Terry was a pretty ordinary guy, someone like any of us. However, in 1977 he lost his right leg from osteosarcoma. Three years later Terry decided to go on a Marathon of Hope raising money for Cancer Research. He ran an average of one marathon each day before he had to stop as his cancer had returned. Today, 40 years later Terry’s legacy continues as each September runners or walkers from multiple continents take part. They participate in singles, doubles, teams, with babies in strollers and with pets.

Terry ran for 5,373 Kilometers before he had to stop as his cancer had returned. The annual Terry Fox Run, first held in 1981, has grown to involve millions of participants in over 60 countries and is now the world’s largest one-day fundraiser for cancer research; over C\$750 million has been raised in his name as of January 2018.²

¹ [Ordinary People Who Changed the World | Reader's Digest](#)

² [Terry Fox - Wikipedia](#)

I expect Terry thought his was pretty ordinary and not destined for the history books. I wonder if he thought he was worthy of doing anything uniquely special?

My Story (Need another picture)

I know I have shared before how amazed I am to be here today, to be anywhere in ministry. It is rather humorous if you know that when Lenore and I were married I wanted absolutely nothing to do with church. Couldn't we just elope or something? How about your back yard? How about a park or something? No, it has to be a church? Fine!

And for reasons still quite unclear to me, 46 years later here I am in a ministry role with you wonderful people. Along the journey I was prompted for sure. Ian have you ever considered ministry? "Are you joking!" Ian you should take this course or that course. Me? Why? Take a leadership role and take a Sunday service? Are you mad? And so, when the decision was made to move forward in a committed way I heard, "well I'm not surprised, what took you so long?"

I didn't believe I was worthy but a bunch of other folks did.

We could surmise that the primary message of Mark's gospel this morning is the foretelling of the one who would come to proclaim the word of God anew. Jesus would be the one to set the nation on its head. He would challenge authority, speak justice to the poor, return site to the blind and prophesy peace in the face of violence. This gospel thread I leave for us to ponder. That is because today, the second Sunday of Advent we alighted the candle of peace.

What has peace got to do with anything I have been sharing? Well I am not thinking of peace in the sense of the absence of war or conflict. I am thinking of peace from within.

How does it feel for all of you to know that, despite what you may have been told throughout your life, despite what you may think or feel now, that you are and you always have been worthy?

God sees us all in that light and the hope is that this knowledge will give us incredible internal peace. We don't have to struggle to try and do better. We don't have to berate ourselves because we can't do something we would like to do, or something we used to be able to do.

In the eyes of the Holy, we are all special, gifted, chosen and loved.
And indeed, we can celebrate the peace that we are certainly most worthy.
This day and every day, live in that peace.

Thanks for listening this morning. Amen