

“This is the one”

June 14, 2009

Text: 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13, Mark 4:26-34

I.

This is the one, said the Lord to the prophet Samuel. ***Go right now, and anoint him!***

And thus it was that the young David—ruddy in color, with beautiful eyes and handsome—the youngest of **Jesse’s** eleven sons, became King of Israel. How improbable, at first sight. How unexpected.

Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, had been told to go to **Jesse the Bethlehemite** and anoint one of his sons as Israel’s new king, for King Saul, Israel’s first king, had fallen in disfavor with the Lord. And David, of course, would go on to become Israel’s greatest king.

A couple of things here: first, we never know what God has in store for any one of us. And, secondly, each of us is ***the one*** for something.

We can’t see the future, as God can, full of possibilities and promise.

- This reading doesn’t suggest that David was ***the one*** for anything else. He was ***the one*** to become king. Leadership was his forte.
- Moreover, the reading doesn’t imply that the ten brothers who were *not* chosen were not ***the one*** for something else.

Again, each of us is ***the one*** for something. Each of us has a special calling. Each of these children here this morning ... each of our daughters and sons—our grandchildren—they are all special in God’s sight. It’s so easy to lose track of how utterly unique each of our children is.

II.

As a child growing up, did you think you were special? I hope so.

- Did you have a sense, early on, that there was something special about you? That you had some special gift, some special talent?
- Did you believe there was some special place for you in this world, some special function or purpose for your life? Again, I hope so.

In talking with my two brothers and sister over the years, we discovered that each of us thought we were our parent's favorite child. As we discussed this, joking about it and so forth, we all think that's a beautiful testimony to our parents' parenting skills. Somehow they were able to love each of us in ways that made us feel *we were the one*.

Reflecting on this with other parents, I concluded long ago that the proper answer to any child's question, *Who's your favorite child?* is ***It's you, you're my favorite.*** And then when the other children inquire, it's the same answer: ***It's you, you're my favorite.***

Isn't that really the most truthful response? We ought to be *partial*—to each of them. They're all different and utterly unique and, in the larger picture, each IS our favorite because each is so special.

With all of this in mind, the most important thing the Church can give our children is an abundant affirmation that God loves them. In the deepest sense, that's what infant Baptism is all about. Baptism, as a sacrament, is really an adult event because it has to do with a conviction in the heart and spirit of the person being baptized.

If we want to be honest, to say nothing of being biblical, rather than baptize infants, we should christen them where *christen* means to name and dedicate. We can sprinkle a little water on them if we want, but it should be a *christening*, a naming and dedication—a joyful celebration of God's love for the child.

Such a *christening* is a statement to ourselves and to the world: ***This is the one.*** For, indeed, they are *the one*—totally loved ... totally cherished.

III.

Part of what this is about is the self-esteem of the individual. To *christen* our children is to declare God's love for them in the high hope that they feel loved, cherished and valued and live out their lives with a robust sense of self-esteem.

We hear all the time about self-esteem issues, don't we? And it amazes us how children, coming out of the same family, with, ostensibly, the same parenting, end up with such varying levels of self-esteem. To some extent, no doubt, it's a mystery. We human beings are complicated creatures.

Still, to have the powerful sense as a child that *you are the one*, the *one* utterly loved by God, for whom God has a totally unique purpose ... to feel that love and affirmation and to know it in your heart is a beautiful thing.

All the time, in our lives, it's easy to think we're not important, that apart from our families and closest friends, the world can easily get on without us.

As human beings, children of God—the God who has a purpose for every human person—we must be careful never to sell ourselves too short. As if, my vote won't really make a difference ... or my gift, my suggestion, my volunteerism ... whatever it is.

Check out this story ...

IV.

A celebrated conductor was holding a rehearsal; and as the mighty chorus sounded out, accompanied by scores of instruments, the piccolo player—a little pint-sized flute—thinking that perhaps his contribution would not be missed amidst so much music, stopped playing. Suddenly, the great conductor stopped everything, crying out,

Where's the piccolo?

The sound of that one small instrument was necessary to the harmony, and the Master Conductor missed it when it dropped out. The larger point: to the Conductor with a capital "C," there are no insignificant instruments in the orchestra. Sometimes the smallest and seemingly least important one can make the greatest contribution.

Again, the conductor knows. God knows.

Jesus' **Parable of the Mustard Seed** is a graphic reminder that at any moment we can be *surprised by grace* ... and how, sometimes, greatness comes in small packages. The truth is, we never know when persons of greatness and stature might rise up from small beginnings or small stature.

In the parable, Jesus says: *With what can I compare the kingdom of God? It is like a **mustard seed**, he says, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of the seeds on the earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs.*

The point is that, although the mustard seed is the smallest of seeds, the smallness says nothing about its potential or its possibilities.

Where's the piccolo?

In the eyes of God, every human being is chosen for something. Sometimes we spend our lifetime trying to discover what that is, but, still, it's there, waiting to be discovered.

V.

I know people—even my age—who find themselves and their passion and go on to have a wonderful second or third career. We never know.

For sure, the prophet **Samuel** didn't know. When Jesse's sons had been marched before him at the service of sacrifice, at first, he was totally impressed with **Eliab**, Jesse's first son. *Surely the Lord's anointed is now before me*, he had said.

And why not? For Eliab was impressive—tall, well-proportioned and handsome. Certainly, Eliab would have been a top candidate for any number of callings.

But the Lord said to Samuel: *Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.*

And when God looks into the heart of each one of us, God sees potential and possibilities that we ourselves can't necessarily see. Again, that's why it's so important for our children to grow up with the reassuring affirmation that—***this is the one***, applies to them ... in some way ... for something.

VI.

I want to share a poignant story I shared a few years back ... where Rabbi Marc Gafni was recalling one of the best bar mitzvahs he had ever performed. It was for a boy named Louis. Louis was awkward and sad.

- His parents, it turns out, did little to encourage his self-esteem.
- They even implied that he was too dumb to learn the Hebrew necessary to be able to recite the scripture verses for his bar mitzvah.

Rabbi Gafni was determined to bring out the best in Louis. With this in mind, he spent extra time teaching him the songs and prayers. Soon, he discovered that Louis, in fact, was smart and that he had an outstanding singing voice.

On the day of his bar mitzvah, Louis performed beautifully. And at the end of the ceremony, Rabbi Gafni stood and spoke directly to Louis ... saying to him:

1. *Louis, this morning you met your real self. **This is who you are.***
2. ***You are good, graceful, talented, and smart.***
3. *And no matter what anyone told you yesterday ... or what they tell you tomorrow, REMEMBER: **This is you.** Remember and don't ever lose it.*

VII.

To say it again, friends, the message of our church and the message of our faith is that every human being is special in God's sight.

You're the one, each one of you—the one in whom God has breathed the breath of life ... and in whom God has entrusted the gift of creation.

Be the one ... let the mustard seeds in your spirit grow and be a blessing for you and for the world you live in.

All praise be unto God! Amen!

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