

“Who You’ll Be...”

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First Presbyterian Church
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New Testament Lesson: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 12-20

Old Testament Lesson: Psalm 19:7-10

Most people remember the song Que Sera, Sera, made famous by Doris Day. Sing that with me now. That song sung here by Indonesian children with disabilities – was something my mother sung to me when I was just a little boy and I asked my mother what would I be.

That song – sung to little children throughout the world – is just another way of saying be whatever you were created to be – “what will be will be.”

In our New Testament lesson for today, the Apostle Paul tells the Christians in Corinth to be who God created them to be. You see, they weren’t all that different from you and me and people throughout the world. It’s just human nature to want to be something other than we are.

Wanting to improve ourselves is a good thing, but the key there is “improving ourselves.” We are who we are and any self improvement has to begin with “the self.” Makes sense. So let’s take a look at ourselves, as individuals.

God created you just the way you are and God has plans for your life – even now – that will glorify God and be a blessing to you and others. The problem is, sometimes we’re not happy with who we are and we try to be something we’re not. Or we look at others and devalue them compared to ourselves, thinking we’re better than they are. Trying to be something we’re not begins with us thinking some people are better than others.

Not so, says Paul. Paul says, “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. For just as the body is one and has many members ...,” says Paul, “so it is with Christ.”

When Paul talks about members of the body, he’s talking about our body parts – such as feet and hands, eyes and ears. Paul is asking us to imagine that any group of people is just like the different parts of your body, everybody has an important role to play, a different job or function to perform or fulfill.

Today, we continue our sermon series on work, exploring different jobs or roles that we might have taken on in life and if they really fit with who God created us to be. And if not, why not!?!

Why would anyone want to be what he or she is not?

Lot's of reasons, reasons such as wanting what someone else has in life and/or not being happy with how we look, or what we are able to do, or what we have accomplished. And let's face it, you may or may not have done or accomplished what you were meant to do. We all struggle with being the best we can be, finding what we're really meant to do in life.

But I'm here to tell you that who you are in your heart of hearts is enough! Being who you are meant to be – and being happy about that – is the first step in accomplishing what God has put you here to accomplish. So if you've ever been derailed from your path in life, or if you are still looking, this is your chance to discover what God has in mind for you. Or maybe you have accomplished what you were supposed to in your early life and now you're at a loss for what's next. God is not done with you!

Whether you are a student or have a career, a parent or a grandparent, single or married, active or not-so-active, God has something out ahead for you and you alone, something designed – as Paul said – for the common good.

“Common” and “good.” I think that's what gets in the way of us living into what's next. We either think we're too “common” to be of any good to anyone, or some people think they're too “good” to do certain jobs or take on certain roles in life.

Well, this all has to do with us judging ourselves in comparison with others, rather than looking to God to reveal to us our true selves.

Listen to what Paul said about each and every one of us. Paul said, “God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?”

Every person has a role for the common good, a role in holding together and building up the body, no matter what type of body or group we're talking about.

Think back to school – even if that was just last week for you students here today – think back to your school. In most classrooms there are students who are athletic, helpful, smart, competitive, daydreamers, thinkers, planners and those who act spur-of-the-moment.

The world needs all these kinds of people. The trick is to be happy being who you are and to find a way to contribute to the group using your God-given talents and gifts.

In every family, there are those who are good at being organized and those who are good at getting things done – lots of things, lots of projects all going on at once. This can drive the organized person crazy, but the family needs both types of people. The trick is finding ways to complement each other's strengths rather than being critical of the differences.

A young couple got married and left on their honeymoon. When they got back, the bride immediately called her mother, who asked her, . “Well, how was the honeymoon?”

“Oh, mama, the honeymoon was wonderful! So romantic” Suddenly the daughter burst out crying. “But, mama, as soon as we returned, Sam started using the most horrible language. He’s been saying things I’ve never heard before! All these awful four-letter words! You’ve got to come get me and take me home ... please, mama!” “Sarah, Sarah,” her mother said, “calm down! Tell me, what could be so awful? What four-letter words has he been using?” Still sobbing, the bride replied, “Oh, mama ... words like dust and cook, wash and iron....”

Now there are some four-letter words for you. W*rk: It’s Not Just Another Four-Letter Word. It’s a gift from God, and that’s true no matter what you’re good at, no matter what you’re called to do, no matter what your role in life is.

The bride in the joke I just told didn’t like the idea of dusting and doing laundry and ironing and cooking. That’s OK. Maybe her husband can do the laundry! (Guys – don’t start throwing things at me).

Really, guys, it’s OK. It’s actually the key to embracing the job that’s put in front of us – realizing that there is no work that is below us. (Yuri, you didn’t hear that.) But it’s true, there is no work that is beneath us, nor is there anything we can dream of that we can’t accomplish – as long as it is in keeping with who God created us to be.

Paul explains it this way: “If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?”

In other words, there is a place for all different types of people when it comes to fulfilling God’s purpose. Everyone is just as important as the next person, and that includes you.

Don’t let envy trick you into thinking you’re not good enough. And don’t let pride tempt you into thinking you’re better than somebody else. Rather, let’s be happy with who we are, and then go out boldly into the world to discover how God would use you, me, all of us, to bring about a better world, more peace and joy in our families, more prosperity in our communities.

Next week, we are going look at what the Bible can teach us about going out and discovering our unique role in life. But for now, let’s remember that whatever that role might be, and whether we know what it is or not, we can all do a better job of embracing and acknowledging the value of all different types of people in this world, and that includes our value, too, our sense of self-worth, that God can use us for the betterment of this world.

In God’s eyes, each person has a role to play in building up the kingdom. How well any one of us steps into that role depends on how open we are to being who we are meant to be AND letting others be who God created them to be.

That's the trick, accept yourself and embrace others and God will point the way forward. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

O great God, be near to your children, we pray. There are those among us who feel like you are distant; draw closer to them in this hour.

There are those who desire so much to feel your presence; let them know your touch.

There are those who have lost hope; remind them of your truth.

We particularly pray for ... following a path to restored health and wholeness – may it be so, Lord.

We pray for those stepping boldly into the life to which you are calling them – smooth their path.

We pray for those needing your comfort and acceptance – help us to be your arms of embrace and assistance.

We know, O Lord, that we cannot see you with our eyes or touch you with our hands, but we believe that you are real. Show us today your power, your goodness, your light.

O great God, be near to your children, and particularly to those gathered here who join together as the body of Christ, even as we join in the prayer that he taught us, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we
forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,
For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever.**

Amen.