

## **Archive for September, 2013**

September 12th, 2013

### **There is always one part two**

In all of our lives there are people who stand out – a best friend, an aunt, a cousin, a teacher or a student – who are unique, special and extraordinary and spending time with them lifts our spirits and our vision of what our life could be.

As teachers we come into contact with dozens of children and in some sense we are like Columbus looking at a new world. Looking at things (and people) we have never seen before, feasting our eyes and souls on the uniqueness of God's creation. Our classrooms give us a similar view to experience and see what truly lies before us. The explorers saw trees but trees they had never seen before. They saw beaches that they had not seen before. They saw fruit but fruit that they had not seen nor tasted before. And they saw people who were brand new to them.

Our classrooms offer this same explorers feast of experience. Who are these children that God made? And as we marvel over them (as we should) we cannot help but notice that even among these unique children there are some that will stand out. While our hearts are open to all of our students there will be those whose lives call out to us. When I teach teachers I ask if any of them have a favorite student in the classroom. Nobody raises their hand because they think they are not supposed to. And I will say come on now I know you all have a favorite. It is either a student who is most like you or a student that has a personality you might wished to have had or a student with a unique gift and calling. Teachers will then timidly raise their hands when I ask the question again. Then I share with them that having favorites is fine and that our challenge is to treat them all the same – unlike Jacob and his favoritism to Joseph.

So what do we do with those special relationships and personalities? We encourage them! The scriptures give us a great picture of the uniqueness of God's choices and relationships. Enoch "walked with God." Abraham was called. Moses was chosen. David

was a man "after God's own heart" as imperfect as he was. John was "the beloved disciple." Pick your favorite from the scriptures. Then watch your classroom to see whom God may have placed there for you to encourage.

Why does God elevate one individual over another? Why does He give gifts in different measures to different people and with us not having much of a say in how they are distributed. David lists his mighty warriors but then says they were not as famous as the three most famous warriors. God gives his gifts to the church but then says not all are prophets, not all are teachers ... but each fulfill a function in God's plan.

Who has God put into your path? To whom will you be an Elijah? Who is your Elisha? How do we become a Barnabas – an encourager? Mostly by looking. And by that wonderful word we have been taught in our Montessori journey – observation. We need to ask the Lord to anoint our eyes so that having eyes to see we can truly see what the Lord opens our hearts to see. Yes, there is always one (and sometimes two or three) that need your love and encouragement to find the extraordinary path that God has chosen for them. Part three next.

September 3rd, 2013

### **There is Always One part 1**

You often find in life there is always one – a neighbor, a student, a teacher, a parent, a co-worker, a church member or even a friend who will drive you to distraction. If you are blessed it will only be to distraction. However, sadly, there are relationships that are toxic. We don't want to believe that people will act badly because we prefer to think everyone acts in goodwill as we do. But the reality is that there is evil in the world and sometimes it is as close as our classrooms and our school.

There will be co-workers who profess one thing with their mouths but whose actions are evil. There are parents when crossed (whatever form that takes) who become malevolent and we are surprised. It doesn't help if I tell you that God is not surprised, after all we are following Him ministering to children and parents so life should be a little bit calmer than the warfare of the world outside of our

classrooms. The reality is that you cannot keep that warfare out and that is why we have been given a handful of spiritual injunctions for just such occasions.

"As far as possible, as it is up to you, live in peace with all men." The challenge here is that we are hit with the "unfairness" of it being up to us to live in peace – especially if we did not start the conflict. "They" should take responsibility to live in peace – after all we didn't start it. Good luck with that because Jesus tells us, "In this world you will have trouble but be of good cheer I have overcome the world." Proverbs also shares that we are wise if we can overlook an insult – or any other conflict. When we don't add wood (or words) to a fire it soon goes out. (I'm still trying to practice that at home.) Consider that nothing about the Christian life is fair. You are required to go two miles, you are required to turn the other cheek, you are required to live in peace as far as possible, you are required to love your enemies. It is just like being the older brother or sister. "Watch out for your sister" "Don't hit your little brother (even if he deserves it.) "Why did you let him do that?" You're older you should know better, behave better, think better etc." Did we ever consider any of that fair? Now consider that Jesus is our older brother and He is tasked with taking care of us.

To finish the discussion of the demands and the unfairness of the Christian life we also need to consider why we were especially chosen to have Jesus, not only as our older brother, but our savior. Why we were chosen to have a relationship with the Creator of the universe; why we were given the Holy Spirit; why we are assured of a future home with God? Did we do anything to deserve it? So it is not "fair" – but grace; and it is that grace we are asked to pour on any situation, any wounds, and any difficulties we face. If we win an enemy we make a friend.

The difficult personalities and situations that we encounter allow us to put into practice all of the fruits of the spirit – love, joy, peace ... (I was hoping not to get to patience ... gentleness and self-control.) What the world tends for evil, God redeems and uses for good. If it is possible to walk through the scenario with grace we may win our brother and bring glory to God. If you can hang on long enough with that difficult parent relationship or that difficult student you may yet see the transformation.

We may choose not to exert our right to be treated fairly or to be shown proper consideration but we may choose to lay our life down in love for Jesus' sake. This is not martyrdom. This is a choice where we choose to follow Jesus. Sometimes, it doesn't turn out right (or the way we think it should) but it pleases Jesus that we are following Him and not our own interests or comfort.

But there may come a point where all of the grace available to us has been expended. What then? As our Bible school dean told us years ago, "We need to love each other but we all don't need to work in the same vineyard." You begin to extract yourself carefully from situations and relationships; careful how you choose your words, careful how you choose your actions, careful how you choose your attitudes; understanding that no matter how careful you are there will be hurt and negative feelings and feelings of failure on our part. Sometimes there is nothing you can do so you put it back into God's hands.

Remember that the scripture is full of examples where there is always one person or relationship that cannot be redeemed. Start with Cain who hated his brother or the people in Noah's time; King Saul and his campaign against David or ultimately Judas and Jesus. Never give up too easily but don't hang on too long to your own detriment. And when is that point? That is why you need the guidance of the Holy Spirit so you operate in God's realm rather than your own. So when you leave it will be right or if you stay it is because there is one relationship to be redeemed and a life to be transformed. In part 2 we will talk about those special relationships where there is always one that is unique.