



WHO DID GOD MAKE YOU TO BE?
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The Fifth Sunday After Pentecost
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Be who God made you to be or what weighs you down?

Our story from the Hebrew scripture this morning is a very dramatic one.

As I was preparing this sermon, I put one of my favorite icons right under the monitor on which I was typing. If you downloaded the bulletin that Tina created, then you see it on the cover. I'll show it to you and ask Chris to implant it into the video too. And it's the picture above. You'll see the Icon is a depiction of this morning's Gospel. This icon was given to me by a dear friend when my life was topsy turvy. She felt that if I prayed with it, it would remind me of the strength and presence of our all-loving God.

The story that follows, one of faith in a potentially fearful situation, was told by a Presbyterian minister. He told of his days as a Navy submariner in the Pacific during World War II. "We would often come under depth charge attack by Japanese destroyers," he said. "The other sailors would be trembling with fear, while I just leaned back and read a comic book. One of them asked how I could be so calm. I explained to him that in my childhood I spent many hours each day at the New Jersey shore. Sometimes a huge breaking wave would catch me by surprise and thrust me under the water, rolling me in the sand. But I learned that when I would just relax thousands of air bubbles like the fingers of God would catch me up and lift me to the surface. Now, whenever I find myself in trouble, I just relax and wait for the fingers of God to reach under me and lift me up."

So I ask you, have you ever been caught off guard by a wave in the ocean? It tosses you – your arms and legs all akimbo? For a moment you may feel that you have no idea which way is up or down. But any experienced wave player will know that you only need to relax to feel those thousands of tiny air bubbles like the fingers of God forcing you to the top of the water.

Our story from Samuel today is a familiar one as it's a very popular Sunday School lesson, as well as one from culture. Children love to act out David and Goliath. One child looming large and the other with the sling shot. The story of the little guy facing the giant and winning. It makes me think of the LGBTQ struggle. Think about all the many things that society puts onto children (and, yes, adults as

well), about who they are. Think of those expectations as the armor that Saul, in a well-meaning fashion, is clothing poor little David with. David didn't ask for those things. He was prepared to face the Philistine as he was. But he became weighed down with all of Saul's good intentions. And so, he was no longer himself. But when he shed all of the things that society said would make him strong for the battle, he was able to be exactly who he was, the way God made him. And that lithe, smart little boy had the strength and power of God to give him the aim and talent to take out the giant Goliath.

What expectations do we as a society, and as parents, put on our children? Doesn't it start with the gender reveal parties that have become so fashionable? Blue or pink candies spilling from a cake to tell the gathered party what sex the child will be! But the truth, we know, is that it's not that simple. Life is never as easy as pink and blue or black and white. There's a whole spectrum in-between. But society has encouraged parents to dress children according to an assigned role and to encourage certain games and a whole range of educational expectations. Yes, times are changing, slowly, but we must be conscious of the biases that we are born into and join the work to help the change continue. To allow children and adults be who God has made them to be and not to weigh them down with our expectations of who that is in our well-meaning attempts to be helpful. When my 3 sons were little, we had all kinds of toys for them to play with including baby dolls, a toy kitchen, and dress-ups. Rick and I were never ashamed when our youngest took his baby doll in her carrier to dinner with us. We only ever wanted our children to be happy. And, yes, quiet in a restaurant!! Slowly society is learning that the toys a child plays with doesn't make them gay. God makes us in God's own image and that is a whole rainbow of ways of being.

But the struggle to be who God makes you brings us back to the Gospel this morning. Living into how God created us is not always easy, yet having faith in a God we know to be present, even active, in our lives means we don't have to feel hopeless when facing tremendous challenges. We all have had difficult experiences in our lives, sometimes there are many all at once. It can be overwhelming, and you might feel like your arms and legs are all akimbo, but then there are the many tiny air bubbles to lift you back up. Think of the friends from church, your work, your community and yes, the very hands of God all pulling you to stand up right on the shore. To be strong and sure of God's love exactly as you are. Prepared and "dressed" to be exactly who God made you to be.

My prayer for us this morning is that we will feel the tiny bubbles of God's presence in our lives and rest assured in God's love for us no matter how the waves toss our boat or what candy color we are.