

One of my favorite phrases to use when I need to be more calm, centered, and reassured is this: We are made as human beings, not human doings. We are human beings, not human doings. In the midst of all the frenzies of life, the fast pace and excess of things and endless choices for so much that we are blessed with, it can be easy to lose our sense of identity in the doing and having of things. Sometimes it's easier to do and seek outside of ourselves because it's less risky than venturing into the vulnerability of being loved just as and who we are. But it is absolutely, with God by your side and the Holy Spirit within and around you, worth it to venture into the belovedness of simply being. God made you just as you are, what an absolute gift.

It's from that place of knowing we are beloved simply for being human rather than doing all the things all the time, that we are reassured, comforted, and empowered to be who God made us to be. We are all uniquely gifted, individual, beloved human beings, with plenty to offer and nourish the world, even just our small corner of it when living gets to feel like a little too much. As we read in the 1 Corinthians text, there is a huge range of gifts that are uniquely part of who each of us is. Teachers, prophets, healers, speakers, interpreters, beloved neighbors to all. We are all unique members of the one body of Christ. Just as our physical bodies have different parts that provide us with different ways of being in the world - eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, arms for hugging and lifting and cooking and dancing and all kinds of beautiful gifts - so each of us, as parts of this body in Christ, have different gifts to give in knowing the world a little more. Different gifts to be in the world differently. Different gifts to love and worship God and love our neighbors.

Today's Gospel story is centered on Jesus identifying himself as the promised Messiah, the one who was long foretold and prayed and hoped for throughout the time of the prophets. Jesus roots his identity as the beloved Son of God, whom the Spirit empowers just as and who he is. Jesus used the exact scriptural words, the readings from the prophet Isaiah, of who he was predicted to be, to confirm exactly who he was. "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." The words of God

made known through the prophets were affirmed by the Son of God himself, Jesus.

And from the reading Jesus provides, we learn why our forebears in faith waited and hoped and prayed so long for this Messiah to arrive, who this Messiah was to be, and from that identity as the Messiah, the hope and joy and new life he would bring. Jesus says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, anointed Jesus in who he was, and particularly through his baptismal calling, to bring good news to the poor. This good news is for anyone who is poor in any way. We may think automatically of folks who are financially poor, which it is part of our Christian calling to support and love our neighbors in need of any kind. But this poorness is also for the poor in spirit. The poor in heart. The poor in emotional well-being and poor in love. There are so many more kinds of being poor that we often ignore, but also contribute significantly to what it is to be human, and to live fully into our inherent belovedness as God's children.

Jesus often provided the healing and freedom people so desperately needed simply by being who he was. A woman whose daughter was healed simply because she had faith, and touched the hem of Jesus' cloak while he walked. Peter was freed from his fear amidst the storm at sea when Jesus walked to him on the water - simply walking as he was to comfort his friend and disciple. Jesus, by using the mud of the earth mixed with his own spit, smeared the mud on a man's eyes and made him see again. Jesus, simply by placing his fingers in a man's ears and saying "be opened!" made a man hear and be cured of his speech impediment. Jesus, simply by embracing his own body, his own spirit, the parts of him that made him unique, made healing possible and freedom a more sure reality for all people, especially those on the fringes of society, the oppressed, the

sick, the hurting, the ones most desperately in need of the promises of the Messiah.

And Jesus is able to be this Messiah and provide all these parts of new and abundant life because Jesus is the Son of God, with whom God is well pleased. Jesus cites the words of the prophet Isaiah, that he will proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. This favor of the Lord is a testament to the generosity of God, given to us simply because we are God's beloved children. The year of the Lord's favor is a reference to the year of Jubilee, which in the Hebrew scriptures is every forty-ninth year (seven times seven), when all debts are forgiven, land is returned to its owners, and all people are made free. Jubilee is a celebration of God's generous love and favor for God's chosen people, and this proclamation of the Lord's favor from Jesus reminds us of God's incredibly abundant generosity. God is generous in love, in grace, in mercy, in forgiveness, and in the promises of everlasting life. This is the good news of Jesus - nothing we do and no part of who we are will ever, ever separate us from God's great and generous love, given to us as humans by God's human and divine Son Jesus, the promised Messiah and Savior of all.

What we are called to do, as followers of Christ and beloved children of God, is to live out the promises of God made in our baptism using the unique gifts God has blessed us with. We are all uniquely, beautifully, wonderfully made with our own gifts to share in the world, and this broken, beautiful world needs each of our unique gifts.

Even when you feel poor in spirit or poor in giftedness, know that God has not abandoned or forsaken you - there are always ways to reconnect with the love of God and share it forth with others and the world God made. Remind yourself that you are a beloved child of God simply as you are - that you have unique gifts that are part of who you are. You are a human being, not a human doing. You are a crucial part of this larger body of Christ, and it takes all of us, in our unique giftedness, to truly live a full life. We don't have to constantly strive and hustle and do to be accepted into Christ's beloved body. We must simply be, rest in the knowledge that God

has made us and called us good, and use our unique giftedness for the sake of God's world and beloved people. May Jesus in his being the Messiah inspire, encourage, comfort, and reassure us with his presence and unending love. Thanks be to God, Amen.