

“Be Still, and Know That I am God”

Sermon for First Christian Church of Decatur, Georgia

“Blue Jean Sunday”

Outdoor Worship in the Church Park and Playground, March 25,
2012

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Holy Scriptures: Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Recently my nephew Luke was playing with his toy Mr. Potato Head.

After assembling Mr. Potato Head with eyes and mouth and hat and ears,

Luke held him in his hands and gazed at him for a few minutes,

and then solemnly said, *“Be still, and know that I am God.”*

Luke was drawing upon language and theology and the story of our faith

that he had gleaned from being in church on Sunday morning

as an active participant in Children Worship and Wonder.

Luke and other children of God quickly figure out

that we are loved by our Creator;

that the One who created and creates desires for us

to reflect upon our part in creation,

and part of being created is that God can recreate us.

Are you like me, enjoying occasional opportunities to play with a Mr. Potato Head

because you get to play the role of Creator?

Our God is a creative Spirit,

one who encourages and empowers us

to use our talents and gifts to create,

and to do so in community, in collaboration, in concert.

When we do so in community, working with one another for a common cause,

we do our best and most amazing work and play and acts of grace.

Remember the story of Stone Soup?

A village is upset when three hungry soldiers wander into their midst.

They hide their provisions and close their doors and windows.

Oh, we have no food, and no place for you to sleep.

Yes, yes, we see. Well, we will simply have to make stone soup.

The curious villagers watch as the soldiers build a fire

under a large kettle filled with water.

The three men said, *“All we need is five large stones.”*

The kindly villagers humored them and found some stones nearby.

The stones are put into the water and soon it begins to boil.

Ah, if only we had some carrots.

I’ve got some carrots, says a villager. She ran to get some.

Ah, if only we had some potatoes...

I’ve got some potatoes, says a villager. He rushed off to fetch a bag.

Ah, if only we had a spare onion or two...

I’ve got an onion to share....

Soon the kettle of stone soup is delicious and plenty to feed all,

and that night the three wandering souls wander no more,

for they sleep in the homes of the mayor, the butcher, and the miller.

A movement for change for the better can last a single night...or for a lifetime.

Never underestimate the power of a small group of people

committed to feeding one another,

a small group committed to caring for real needs of real people,

a small group committed to social change,

a people fueled by hope and God's creative power.

Margaret Mead pointed out that not only do small groups change the world,

it is the only way it ever has.

The Lord provides through small groups of people

working and playing together in concert, united to serve.

Through such love and hard work and sacrifice

God's provisions are more than enough for our needs.

A couple years ago a study was done to find out what it would take

for us and our neighbors to become satisfied with what we have,

with what is provided.

Interestingly, the answer was the same regardless of whether

the respondents were rich or poor or smack dab in the middle.

The answer is...20%.

Across the board people felt or thought

that if they had only 20 percent more they would be happier,
they would live better, their nerves would be quieted.

Didn't matter whether they made \$10,000 a year or \$100,000 or \$10 million.

Each one felt they needed 20% more.

Let me point out an observation:

those of us who feel or think this way may never, ever be satisfied,

for we will always be reaching and searching and seeking,

when all we need to accomplish

that which must be created and sustained

is already provided,

right here, within and without.

Max Lucado (In the Grip of Grace, p. 131) said:

Imagine we are all passengers on an airplane

and suddenly the pilot rushes out of the cockpit.

The pilot exclaims, *“We’re going to crash! We have to bail out!*

Here, there are enough parachutes for everyone!”

The first passenger makes a request. *“Is there ay way I can get a pink one?”*

The pilot shakes his head in disbelief.

“Isn’t it enough that I gave you a parachute at all?”

So then the first passenger takes it and jumps.

The second asks, *“Any way you can keep me from getting airsick as I fall?”*

“No, but I can ensure that you will have a parachute while you fall.”

One after another every passenger asks for goggles, or boots,

or to wait for later, or to change the plans, or to overcome a fear of falling.

“You people don’t understand,” says the pilot.

“I have given you a parachute; that is enough!”

Only one item is necessary for the jump, and it is provided.

God places the strategic tool in our hands. The gift is adequate.

But are we content? Is it enough? Will we share? Will we work together?

Will we use our gift to ensure our neighbors have enough as well?

No, says Max Lucado. We are anxious, restless, even demanding. Yet God loves us so much that God gives us a nudge, a tool, and suspends us in the grip of grace.

Annie Lamott wrote in Traveling Mercies,

“It’s funny. I always imagined when I was a kid

that adults had some kind of inner toolbox, full of shiny tools:

the saw of discernment, the hammer of wisdom,

the sandpaper of patience.

But then when I grew up I found that life handed you

these rusty bent old tools – friendship, prayer, conscience, honesty –

and life said,

Do the best you can with these,

they will have to do.

And mostly, against all odds, they are enough.” (p. 103)

Deep down inside we know, we know

God creatively provides more than enough to draw us together...

to feed us...to change us...to heal us...to love us...
...and the whole world.

All power be to the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!