

May 12, 2024
Seventh Sunday of Easter

Meditation: “We are all good enough”

Have any of you ever played informal team sports when you were a kid? You know, the kind that are organized by the children themselves in the neighbourhood, or at the playground, or maybe even in the school yard? When I was growing up, there were the four of us and only three other boys and two other girls in the entire neighbourhood. Definitely not enough to make up one team, let alone two, so, for me, those games were organized at school. I remember, it was always Tony Bone and Stevie McClellan who were the team captains, so they were always the two who got to pick who would be on their team. And when the teams were complete, there were always a couple of kids who were left out entirely. I was one of those kids. The first couple of times you could justify to yourself the reason you were left out was because the teams had all the members they needed, but by the third or fourth or twenty-seventh time, it was clear that you weren't wanted, that there must be something wrong with you. As a kid, it was hard on the ego. Those of us undesirables usually went home to our mothers, our chins quivering and our eyes welling up.

Jesus had picked twelve for his team. They followed him everywhere. Hung on his every word. Watched his every move. Learned all they could about what Jesus was about. The only difference was that what Jesus was up to wasn't a game – it was life and death. And, other than the leader, Jesus, who was crucified by the Romans, one of the twelve did die – Judas Iscariot. That left them down one member, and the others were determined to find a successor to bring their number back up to twelve.

On the schoolyard, we eventually learned that if we didn't go home to mom, and we waited long enough, one of the other kids would get injured, or would have a parent show up to drag them home by the ear, and a team would be down by one member. The captain would be forced to pick a replacement from those of us who hadn't been picked in the first draft – if there were any of us left. Our best chance of getting on the team was to stay at the game, and hope for an opening.

The twelve weren't the only ones who followed Jesus everywhere. There were others, they just hadn't been chosen for the core group, but like the twelve they stayed and followed, and listened, and watched, and learned. Two of them: Joseph called Barsabbas – a name eerily similar to the name of the man Pilate released to the crowd on the day of Jesus' crucifixion – a name one would think would be perfect for the group – Bar, son of + abbas, of the father = son of the father – and also known as Justus, and Matthias were nominated to fill the opening created by Judas' death. After prayer and a vote, Matthias was chosen to complete their number.

What I find interesting is that Matthias was chosen by the eleven to bring their number back up to twelve, but they weren't the only ones trying to bring the group back up to full strength. Jesus was also picking a twelfth (thirteenth?). There was this guy, a Pharisee, a very ardent Pharisee. He had been one of the ones pushing for Jesus' crucifixion. And after Jesus had been crucified, he pursued people who identified as members of 'The Way.' He had been the one to lead the stoning of Stephen, the very first martyr of the movement – if you discounted the death of Jesus himself. This man travelled far and wide seeking to eliminate members of the movement Jesus had started. Sometimes he led the stoning, other times he directed it. He was on his way to Damascus, as he had heard there were members of 'The Way' there, when something strange happened. He was enveloped in a bright light, he heard a voice asking why he was persecuting Jesus and, after the experience was over, he was blind – something like scales covered his eyes. This man, Saul, had been chosen by Jesus to succeed Judas. And like others Jesus had chosen, he was given a new name – Paul.

When, as kids, we weren't picked, ever, for a team, we went home, egos bruised and battered, to our mothers. And our mothers always held us and told us that despite the fact the others hadn't chosen us for their team, we were good enough, we were loved. Despite the fact that Saul had pushed for Jesus' crucifixion, had stoned Stephen, had pursued and persecuted many others who followed 'The Way', in Jesus eyes he was good enough for the team.

Like those of us never chosen for a team, like those not chosen to be one of the twelve, we are all flawed and imperfect. And like our mothers, who love us just as we are, God sees that we are all good enough – good enough to be loved – good enough to play a role in God’s continuing plan to redeem creation – good enough to build a world of justice and righteousness and harmony. We are all good enough, and then some, because we are all children of God. Thanks be to God, and thanks be to our mothers who have taught us a little of what God is like.