
My Dear Child, I Am Pleased With You

Mikell Chapel
March 1, 2009
Genesis 9:8-17
1 Peter 3:18-22
Gospel: Mark 1:9-15
The Rev. Canon Carolynne G. Williams

My late father was a man who was larger than life to me. By profession he was a high school principal for twelve years. His calling, his vocation was serving as an ordained minister for 48 years in the Baptist Tradition. One of his most "revered" accomplishments was that of being a graduate in the class of 1925 from Morehouse College here in Atlanta. "A Morehouse Man".

I can recall with accuracy hearing him sing, especially in the shower, one of the lines from the school's Alma Mater, "Dear Ole Morehouse," "Dear Ole Morehouse," we have pledged our loyalty, a fact until his dying day that he would never let you forget. He loved his Alma Mater and rightly so.

I recall being with him, as his driver, for his 60th reunion at Morehouse. He and five other Morehouse Men were gathered in conversation. One of the men, The Rev. H.J.C. Bowden, an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Atlanta, began to sing the refrain of the Morehouse hymn. In harmony, Father Bowden and my Dad harmonized with perfection. It was a wonder to witness.

Due to my father's commitments which were many and as a product of his time he was not demonstrative in expressing his love. We knew that we were loved, my sister and me by his thoughts, words and deeds. In the midst of all that he did for us, I somehow still sought his affirmation. I longed to hear the words, "My Dear child, I am pleased with you". Somehow, I had to keep striving, so I thought, to hear those words when in reality they were already around me in a full embrace.

On the other hand, many children grow up never hearing the words from their father, "I love you and I am pleased with you and with what you are doing." They don't receive hugs, or looks from their Dad's eyes that convey the message, I love you and I am proud to be your Dad.

When the loving God looks at us, and at every baptized and believing Christian, God says to us what was said to Jesus on that day. "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Can you imagine how powerful those words were and are? In the Gospel of Mark, God speaks directly to Jesus, "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased." God is speaking directly to God's child.

When the spirit is sent upon him represented in scripture by a descending dove, Jesus is driven immediately into the wilderness to be tempted. He is tempted for a period of forty days. While we may not see a descending dove today, we are reminded during this season of time, this span of forty days, to come and allow the spirit within us to guide us.

Temptations come onto our path all of the time, but to follow the model of Jesus that we as Christians have been given during this season of lent, this opportunity once again has been given to us. We have been given permission to slow down,

to reflect, to fast if fasting is on your mind to do, to give up something, to take on something else, to intentionally be with God.

So we have begun our countdown. May I suggest that we take our time and not rush through this time. Take each day as it presents itself and know that we are loved. Anticipate perhaps some struggle but, not in a harmful manner. Struggle may come when we look inward to determine what is no longer needed that we have been carrying for a long time, either known or unknown. The temptations will be there when we look deep within ourselves to, perhaps, retain those places of need that we thought were necessary. During these forty days we may find that indeed we are moving forward in the places where it really matters.

When we confront and go into those places that we have protected for so long, we will begin to find that valid criticism comes from those who care about you and love you. We will understand that only God is perfect and in order to do things well with excellence we do not have to be perfect. In fact no one is perfect. Only God. During these forty days we can certainly proclaim the "good news".

We can proclaim the good news in the midst of job losses and income streams being reduced. We can proclaim the good news in the midst of fear in these uncertain times. We can talk about the Good news of hope, and love, especially God's love for us and value good health. We can proclaim the good news of healing, of relationships flourishing and seek with anticipation of what is yet to come.

When I stopped striving to be assured that I was loved by my late Dad, I recognized that his love for me was as clear as my nose upon my face.

My Dad's model for living was Jesus Christ. It was evident in his daily living. It was evident in the legacy that he and my mother left. The value of his life intertwined with mine is filled with the love that only a Dad can give.

It was a bit above being a Morehouse Man.

So, let us not linger too long with our inadequacies, perceived and actual, or with our failings in this season of reflection. If we linger too long we run the risk of missing what God has in store for us. There is much to be anticipated.

Our continued formation is a lifelong process which determines our wholeness as we move toward God.

Let us proclaim Jesus Christ is Lord, the Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the eternal.
The Good News, indeed. We will be better for it.

Amen.

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