

## **Just Who Do You Think You Are?** ~ October 18, 2009

Job 38: 1-7, 34-41; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10: 35-45

Years ago the question, “Who died and made you God?” seemed to be very popular. I have not heard it as often now as I did then. It was a roundabout way of asking someone, who believed he or she had all the answers and the only right way of doing something, if they thought they were God in the way they ordered others around or corrected them. It was a sort of polite way of asking, “Just who do you think you are?”

We all know people who are a tad bossy and who will listen only to themselves and what they believe is the right way of handling any and every situation. These are usually very well-intentioned people who have a goal in mind and nothing, not even a better way of doing things, will keep them from reaching the goal that is theirs alone. They clearly see the forest, while never really seeing all the wonderful, diverse, colorful trees that make up that forest. As a result they trample the ideas and feelings of others as they relentlessly pursue their goal. They feel they are little gods who can manage everything better than even God could.

Now Job was a humble man, we are told; one who had great patience. If we decide to read the book of Job we discover, however, that his patience was not all it was cracked up to be. One of his three friends and advisors, during his time of trouble, Elihu, put forth a theory of the way God works and Job listened, possibly nodding in agreement. This led to this morning’s reading and a rather stern reply by the Creator.

Basically, God asks just who these mortals think they are to question the way in which God works. Through a series of questions, a very common method of teaching in the ancient world, God puts his humans in their place. They are reminded that they are they and God is God and that they do not have control over everything, if anything. They have no right to create human formulas so that they can box in God for easy handling.

Later on in this little story, Job is addressed directly by God in much the same manner. “...the Lord said to Job: ‘Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Anyone who argues with God must respond.’ Then Job answered the Lord: ‘See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice but will proceed no further.’” Later Job acknowledges where he has erred in his consideration of God. Job was wise to refrain from responding further to a grumbling God.

God is not grumbling in the little Letter to the Hebrews. God doesn’t have to—the author notes that no human, not even Jesus, appoints him or her self to be a worker for God, God makes the selection.

Often pastors are asked how they have “chosen” their profession. Our response is that we are “called,” we have no choice in the matter. I would guess, for almost all of us, this is very true. Many of us resist for a while, understanding that this is a life changing event and once the call is accepted our lives will move to a very public stage and that they will never be ours again.

While our calling is very rich with rewards, certainly not of this earth, it can also be very draining work. It can be very disappointing from time to time and even discouraging. Perhaps, this is because pastors are human and we have hope for the humans we serve as faithfully as we can. Often our hopes are fulfilled as we see spiritual growth in those around us, a new willingness in those we serve to consider all others they see to be the children of God, as they believe themselves to be, a new dawning of a sense of forgiveness, and times of harmony when working together. Then there are those other times when we see those we love slide back a little, begin a bit of nitpicking, develop little territories that are protected causing the death of friendship and harmony. Negative times are caused by people who begin to think that it is “all about me” when it should be all about the community of faith and about God. People begin to look at one another during these tough times and think, “Who died and made you God?”

This happens in all communities of faith—those that are large and those that are small. Those that are wealthy and those that struggle to open the doors on a Sunday morning and all those in between. It happens because we are human with our own desires and needs. It happens because we forget that we do not call our selves to what it is we do in service to God. We forget that we all have a higher calling.

Like James and John we sometimes feel we need to be the ones recognized, the ones who sit at the right hand and left hand of Christ. Those are the times, when we feel pride swell up inside us and when we literally or figuratively elbow others aside so we can be first, those are the times when we need to remember the words of Jesus that tell us we must be servants to others. Period. Each must be willing to be a servant. A servant who goes about his or her work without any expectation of fanfare or reward; a servant who is flexible in dealing with others, who listens and learns, who reflects before answering, who remembers that all are as wonderfully made as he or she is. James and John seemed to have forgotten this. So, Jesus asks, “Who do you think you are?”

Just who is it you think you are? Are you a child of God, wonderfully made who has the ability to see those around you in the same light? Are you a doer of the word and not a hearer only? Are you ready to pick up responsibilities and carry them, cheerfully, expecting nothing in return? Are you one who is willing to consider solutions to a problem or challenge that are other than your own? Are you one who humbly understands and accepts the call God has on your life?

The answers to these questions are yours alone and reside within your hearts. If your answers do not seem quite right—there is always another chance to modify your selves and move forward. The choice is always yours---choose wisely.

*-- Amen*