

Becoming Real Romans 12:1-8

Susan told me that if I would come tonight I could read from Winnie the Pooh if I wanted to. I thought that was a great invitation. Winnie the Pooh, with its gentleness and sometimes strange wisdom, has much to commend it as a sermon. It was very tempting to turn to the pages of that beloved book or to even pick up Dr. Seuss and share a little poetry with you. But, instead, I turned to a reading from the Velveteen Rabbit, by Margery Williams. This particular reading was used by a friend of mine in her summer wedding service.

Excerpt From The Velveteen Rabbit by, Margery Williams

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but Really loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get all loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

Becoming real is the goal set before us by Jesus. He called us

all to become the very best humans we can become as we journey through life. Becoming real, in this call to wholeness, means that we do not always put ourselves first, it means that we treat others with kindness and patience and understanding, love and forgiveness.. It means that we listen to others' ideas and allow time and space for a fair exchange of thought. We do these things because we dare call ourselves Christian and we understand that this is the way we are to live.

Our reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans, reminds us that we are all part of the body of Christ, even though we have different gifts. It tells us that we are supposed to use these gifts in a proper manner to strengthen the body of Christ to keep it running as smoothly as humanly possible.

I do not know where I would be in our dear church if it were not for others who can balance a checkbook or sing, or play the organ, order the candles, or clean the church, or teach Sunday school, or run a tag sale, or set up coffee hours or arrange funeral receptions. The list goes on and on. We all are needed with our special gifts and talents to sustain our church and our faith.

By discovering and practicing our special gifts, we become more real, more genuine, more in tune with all that we

should be. We learn that we don't have to pretend to be better than anyone else, we just need to note that they have special gifts, too, and honor them.

It takes time and sometimes our hair wears off in the process or we become a little loose or tight in the joints, but we gradually grow into an understanding of what it means to be made in the image of God. We discover what it means to become better imitations of Christ. We become comfortable with who we are and who we might become.

In doing this we discover that we do not have to conform to the standards of the crazy, mixed-up world we live in but that we need to reform our minds so that we become the best reflections of God's love to all around us-- so that we begin to see things in a new light and begin to see people through the eyes of Jesus.

And that is what we all are seeking. That is our goal. To look at the world from the place of undying love. To set aside our anxieties and all that may trouble us and to find some peace in the knowledge that our Creator always wants the very best for us.

I would like to close with a wonderful little prayer by Henri Nouwen that often sets me back on the straight and narrow when I find myself being less than real. Let us pray:

Henri Nouwen from [A Cry for Mercy](#)

O Lord, life passes by swiftly. Events that a few years ago kept me totally preoccupied have now become vague memories; conflicts that a few months ago seemed so crucial in my life now seem futile and hardly worth the energy; inner turmoil that robbed me of my sleep only a few weeks ago has now become a strange emotion of the past; books that filled me with amazement a few days ago now do not seem as important; thoughts which kept my mind captive only a few hours ago, have now lost their power and have been replaced by others.

Why is it so hard to learn from this insight? Why am I continuously trapped by a sense of urgency and emergency? Why do I not see that you are eternal, that your kingdom lasts forever, and that for you a thousand years are like one day? O Lord, let me enter into your presence and there taste the eternal, timeless, everlasting love with which you invite me to let go of my time bound anxieties, fears, preoccupations, and worries. "Seek first the kingdom," you said, and all these other things will be given you as well." All that is time bound will show its real meaning when I can look at it from the place where you want me to be, the place of undying love.

Lord, teach me your ways and give me the courage to follow them. Amen