

## **No Partiality ~ January 09, 2011**

**II Isaiah 42:1-9; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17; Psalm 29**

Those of us, who are the parents of more than one child, understand the need to try to treat each child in the same manner as the other or others. Kids notice inequalities from the number of Christmas gifts each receives, to whether or not we had the time and energy to volunteer for all the projects they wanted to be involved in. They remember these things and remind us of our failings, usually at family gatherings. Fortunately, as they mature, the number of gifts does not matter and we parents are forgiven our transgressions.

In our reading from the Book of Acts, Peter tells us that God has the wonderful talent of considering all of us as equally loved. Peter reminds us, if we have faith in God, no matter who we are or where we might be in life, we are loved by God. It's that simple.

Most often, we feel we are loved by God when things are going right in our lives. We sense the even-handedness of our Creator. "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world."

At other times, we cannot believe God loves us, or even cares about us. We feel this way when we encounter the hardships of life. But there is no partiality when it comes to joys, and there is no partiality when it comes to sorrow. Not one of us is exempt from the randomness of life. As we live and breathe we are exposed to all life offers. Bad things happen to good people—consider the shootings in Arizona—and good things happen to bad people.

A lot of people, when beset by problems, ask me, "Why is God doing this to me or to him or to her?" Please, God is not a being who delights in punishing us for anything for one reason or another. I cannot believe that people become ill or struggle with a disease or lose a job or are homeless because their faith is not strong enough or because of one transgression or another. If that were the case we all should be walking around suffering. When I am faced by the "Why is God doing this question?" often I answer, as did a wise friend of mine, "Why not?" What makes you think that you are exempt from life's difficulties?"

Knowing that God loves us in the ups and downs of living should give us the knowledge that we can survive anything even if the outcome is not of our own choosing. We should have the inner strength that will help carry us forward through all the disappointments in life.

Often, our problems come from the choices we have made in the past and that we continue to make. Knowing that God supports us as we journey along enables us to reflect on where it is we find ourselves and choose a different direction if we decide we should. If we find ourselves spinning our wheels and making no progress with a problem we need to find another avenue and then, try that. If we don't, we find ourselves stuck in the same old rut and we wonder "Why is God doing this to me?" The answer is God is not. We are.

One definition of insanity is "to do the same thing over and over again and expect a different outcome." Every moment we have the opportunity to make a fresh start, to change direction, to find our footing, to heal a relationship that has gone south, to give up

our ego-centered way of living and choose the way of service to others. Very often, we cannot even consider doing so because it might interrupt the way we do things and cause us to consider where it is we have fallen short. We are such creatures of habit that we like things to remain the same, no matter how bad they might be.

This is a new year, this is a time when we need to reflect on the old while holding in our minds the image of Jesus rising up from the waters of baptism and hearing a voice from heaven say, "This is my Son, the Beloved with whom I am well pleased." That same voice and those words exist for us all, lifting us up into new pathways of life as the beloved children of God.

*-- Amen*