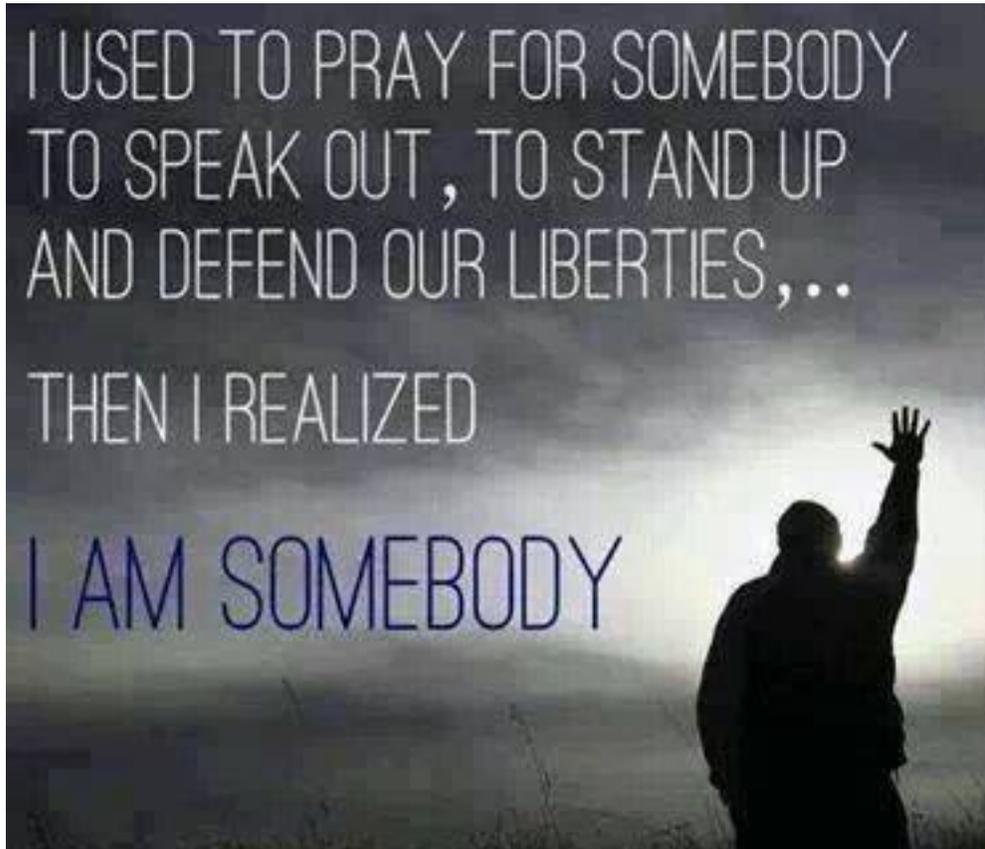


FEBRUARY 26, 2015

we are somebody ...



2 Corinthians 1:3-4 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

“Life isn’t fair!” “There are too many issues to face – what do you want us to do?” “These people here do not know what real poverty is! Go outside the USA and experience real poverty! I have no interest in helping people who are

already wealthy and can help themselves.” “Even Jesus said, the poor will always be with us. Remember Matthew 26:11”

Life isn't fair – but doesn't God ask us to trust in Him and in His plan, while being compassionate to others?

There are too many issues to face – but why not work to solve one of the problems locally?

I don't know what I want you to do. I cannot offer you a perfectly crafted plan to resolve a specific issue - but don't you want to decide which issue is most in need from your perspective? We are a very well-educated and reasonable congregation – can we not work together to decide on the issue to solve, and develop a plan to resolve?

It is true, this area is wealthy by world standards, and most of our neighbors have not faced real poverty – but don't all God's people deserve compassion?

And, if we can raise these people up to God's level of compassion through our own acts of compassion, perhaps, we will set the fires of compassion blazing so fierce, that it will spread beyond the Pascack Valley toward those suffering in real poverty.

And finally, yes, there will always be people less fortunate. ***“There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.” Deuteronomy 15:11*** There will always be the mentally ill; a sudden tragedy that leaves a family homeless; a veteran with PTSD; the elderly who have outlived their family and their savings. There will always be other countries suffering from disease, war, brutality, and greed. But this should not stop us from making, even a small change, locally!

Why not create a community where those capable of earning a productive living can, and even more, are fully welcomed in our society? In turn, having experienced compassion, would they not become compassionate themselves to others?

Why not create a place where women earn a lifetime of equal wages so they can support their families and themselves? Where immigrants can become citizens and earn an education and build businesses that create jobs. Where all people, including lesbians and gay men, can marry in love and share in the benefits of family and societal support. Where the elderly live in comfort, are listened to, revered for their experiences, and we learn from them while we support them. Where we find new ways to understand the mentally ill and benefit from their unique perspectives. Where we bring a moment of peace to those suffering with PTSD, as well as a safe place to remember and overcome their pain.

Why not be compassionate to all – and through our compassion, maximize the numbers of people to be productive and inventive in our society? Then the needs of the truly less fortunate – “the always poor” of whom Jesus refers - will not only be fulfilled by all of us – but will be raised up. ***And all our lives will be better.*** All of us will feel less overwhelmed. All of us will find the joy of giving and receiving compassion.

This week, I encourage you to read [this Sojourner blog post](#) about transforming how we look at those suffering around the globe – people we call victims – and how art and humor are shifting our beliefs in what is needed to change the world.

And watch [this PBS NewsHour video](#) about an artist who took up the challenge of a young student - “if you're an artist, why can't you create a solution?”

Be not discouraged – look for inspiration, for it is all around us. Talk to me. Help me understand what is needed to begin to realize God's compassionate kingdom on earth. Help me help us become a church of action, while honoring us as a church of mercy and loving support.

In Christ's Peace, Lisa