



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Pastor Terry's Thoughts of the Week

Discipleship
Giving Thanks at Odd Times

It's amazing how things come up in your mind at interesting times. Today I've been thinking about something that happened maybe 35 years ago in Boston. We had a member of our congregation who fiddled and who enjoyed making fiddles for the children in his family.

One grandchild started with a quarter sized and finally moved up to a full sized violin. And she was good! She began to take part in fiddling competitions and win some prizes. Her grandparents thought she should also take "real" violin lessons, and she did, also excelling with them. Her teacher was a violinist in the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO). In the music world it is known that violinists do not appreciate fiddlers so the young girl kept her competitions from her teacher. She eventually became part of the BSO youth orchestra.

Finally the day came when she won a very prestigious fiddling contest. Of course the results were in the newspaper. She hoped her violin teacher wouldn't see it as she knew he would be upset with her.

At her next lesson he looked at her rather sternly and said "I see where you have won a fiddling contest. You must be quite good at that." She didn't know what to say since he seemed so stern, so she said nothing. He continued to look at her and then said "Will you teach me how to fiddle?"

There are times in our lives when we think we are in big trouble and times when we probably should be in big trouble - but there are also times when we think punishment looms and it turns out that we have a gift. Granted, that's not very often, but there are times when we are far harder on ourselves than is either right or necessary.

You know why we love puppies – for me, even the psychotic puppy my neighbors have? They are filled up with affection for us. They do wrong things and we forgive them immediately. We might shout at them, but they know we still care about them. We are stern with them when we teach them – check out how Rocky is trained! – but at other times it’s all pats and play.

Puppies are not hard on themselves. They just respond to the good people around them (except my psychotic Katie who only likes other dogs and about 4 people) and expect food and a place to stay warm dry. They can be abused, but they can be taught to trust again.

Now, what does all this have to do with discipleship and giving thanks? Obviously my little friend of fiddling fame was very hard on herself until she realized she had a gift that even a gifted person wanted to share. There are times when we see ourselves as having only negative qualities when others would like to be able to live as we do. And puppies can teach us that no matter how many stupid things we may do in a given day, we are still loved by others. We may not even feel lovable, but a pat on the shoulder, an appropriate hug or a kind word lets us know that God is active in our lives through others. Give thanks. It’s amazing what God can do when we give him a chance.

TMK

-- Week of February 1, 2009