



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church *Terry's Treasures*

Living the love of God -- Open Up!

I remember when I was in a class one time that had some psychology as part of it. The leader informed me that I had to learn to loosen up. I was told I had built such strong walls around me that my personhood could not come through. I agreed – and said why. The children of Swedish immigrants are taught to stay in the background, sing and recite stuff by heart. You put that on me and then add New England reticence and you have not only high walls but very thick ones!

I guess the course worked to some extent because I was forced by circumstances to get into new situations and meet people on a different level than I had ever done before. I was learning to listen to God.

To some degree, I had to open up. I had to open up because I needed to speak to people with empathy and loving concern. I had to watch, carefully, what I said and how I related to people. After a while it became somewhat natural. I liked how it was when people responded to me and I just kept it up – it was a great learning experience. God had given me a great gift.

But what had happened? In fact, I had begun to listen! And when I listened I discovered that every person I met had a fascinating life. They really filled me with, not only information about themselves, but how they had dealt with difficult times in life and recovery. As they opened up, it helped me to share some of my own life. The wall came down, brick by brick.

Sometimes, in our ignorance, we overlook some people who seem to be limited physically and we assume that carries on to their intellect. I think of three people I know something about.

The first, you also know. Steven Hawking who has lived far beyond what medical people had predicted. The others are two young men who were born with cerebral palsy. One I knew about – a friend's son—and one I knew from my parish. They were both bright kids and were very limited in what they could do, physically. They both attended Anne Carlson School in Jamestown, South Dakota and they learned – Oh yes, they learned.

Mike, my friend's son, continued his education and finished up working at Temple University. He was a person they used to test new "talking boards" – he would use them, critique them. He helped improve life for many people.

Tim was my parishioner. He attended public school until 7th grade. It was then his folks heard about this wonderful school. Tim went there and began a new stage in his life. He was confirmed at a Jamestown Lutheran Church and was active in the congregation. He is now 40-something – I find that so hard to believe. He is living in a center for independent living in St. Paul Minnesota, working, he has married and he keeps in touch with people on his computer. He's also very computer knowledgeable. He periodically visits his home in Northern Minnesota – his sister drives him up there – and he has had a very useful life.

It is God's assurance of love that helps us open up to others and receive their insight and love. Work at it, pray about it and you will find some very exciting contact in you life!

So to each of us – open up. By doing that you will find fascinating individuals in the most interesting places!

TMK

-- Week of February 5, 2012