

GOING DOWN

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“Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you arguing about on the way?’ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest.”

Boy is that one big Oops! The disciples – they wanted to be the greatest. We too have dreams and aspirations to become something important! What or who is it that you dreamed to become? Someone famous? Someone beautiful? Rich? Famous? The greatest?

God seems to have a different promotion system AND it always involves going down. Now when I think about going down, it’s almost like a four letter word. We might only have bad thoughts about this word. “The stock market is going down!” might be awful to hear if you are heavily invested in stocks. Or we might hear “here’s your last paycheck, the company is downsizing.” But there can be an upside too. If you are overweight, you like to hear “Yeah, I went down another pound today!” Or if your blood pressure is climbing past normal, you’d like to hear your health care provider say “Your blood pressure is going down.”

In our beautiful creation, there is one entity that ALWAYS seeks to go low.

The Water Song

Come, oh come! let us away- lower, lower every day,
Oh, what joy it is to race, down to find the lowest place.
This the dearest law we know- "It is happy to go low."
Sweetest urge and sweetest will, "Let us go down lower still."

Hear the summons night and day calling us to come away.
From the heights we leap and flow to the valleys down below.
Always answering to the call, to the lowest place of all.
Sweetest urge and sweetest pain, to go low and rise again.

It is now that for many years, whenever I need inspiration, there is one place I go. I need to go to Yellowstone and stand at the brink of the Upper Falls. The water from the Yellowstone River, is flowing along quite serenely until it suddenly comes to this great fault in the earth. The view is more than magnificent. I am always amazed that amidst the thundering of the falls, there will be a small delicate flower growing out of the rock just a few inches away from the tumult.

I find it a very spiritual moment to imagine the joy with which the water gives itself, racing to find the lowest place. There's no hesitation, but rather leaping without abandon. "Sweetest urge and sweetest pain, to go low and rise again." It's the most interesting phenomenon isn't it? Water goes low, only to rise again and do it all over again. It really somewhat like God's promotion system. You go down to become great in God's eyes.

If we had a map or an app that could show us where we actually are on our journey to become great in God's eyes, it would surely help. Perhaps there is a way!

You see, the mission of the church has always been clear. In the Great Commission, we are called to make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has also told us that there are really only two rules – we need to love God with all our heart and mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. Simple, right? Easy – heck no!

A book that I'm reading right now called *Move*, recalls the 1957 movie of Dr. Suess – *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. The people of Whoville reach out to the Grinch but they end up embarrassing him and he decides to steal all their presents for Christmas. The

tenacious Cindy Lou Who discovers that the Grinch's heart is actually two sizes too small. But wonder of wonders, when he tries to save the presents, the magic xray machine shows us that his heart actually grows 3 times larger that day. If you haven't seen this movie, maybe you need to rent it and watch it again!

The author speculates that it be great if we had that xray machine inside the door of every church so that we could actually measure everyone's heart and see if we are in fact growing to love God and one another more. Alas, such a machine doesn't exist.

So how do we know if we are growing more in love with Jesus and our neighbors? One of the evidences of our love growing is when we can serve others....those can't pay us back, who we may not know, who perhaps have made those decisions that land them in jail, or in the homeless shelter...the marginalized, the destitute, the hungry. How do we give ourselves with abandon to serve?

Today, we are going to sing songs about being a servant. We'll hear the familiar scriptures about being a servant. When I sit down, you will have heard a sermon about becoming a servant. For a moment, our heartstrings will be pulled and perhaps we will even pray the prayer that asks God to help make us a servant.

Today, my invitation and challenge is this. TRY IT. Try serving someone you don't know, who can't pay you back. If you need a visual inspiration, go to Yellowstone and stand at the Brink of the Upper Falls. Ask God to help you become like the water that gives itself with abandon to go down. Watch the movie How the Grinch Stole Christmas and afterwards, ask the Lord to show you what size your heart is towards Jesus and towards your neighbor.

And like the water, as we go low, we will rise again.

It's the model Jesus showed us on the cross.

“You came from heaven to earth
To show the way
From the earth to the cross
My debt to pay
From the cross to the grave
From the grave to the sky”

Hear the summons night and day calling us to come away.
From the heights we leap and flow to the valleys down below.
Always answering to the call, to the lowest place of all.
Sweetest urge and sweetest pain, to go low and rise again.

It's God's way.