

It's Personal

By Rev. Sheryl Stewart

Isaiah 40: 21-31

1 Cor. 9: 16-23

Mark 1:29-39

RR: Psalm 147: 1-11

Summary: When we say, “Jesus is my personal Lord and Savior,” we sum up the whole Gospel.

I'm not a big fan of action movies, but I watched enough of them with various boyfriends as I grew up; so, one feature stands out. When the hero says, “It's personal,” there is nothing that is going to stop him! An entire massed army of Isis terrorists may be charging toward him with flame throwers and rocket launchers. Right behind them could be a massed horde of demons led by Satan himself. Overhead, the Death Star may be just releasing its termination ray as the sun goes supernova. Somehow, that hero will not only survive, but rescue the girl!

One of my favorite books by Madeline L'Engle has a similar moment when an angelic cherubim decides to give up his immortal life in order to destroy an evil which threatens the life of a sick child.

In “The Wind in the Door,” this particular angel is a living portion of the mind of God and has the responsibility of remembering the names of every star in the universe. What gives this spirit the courage to make the sacrifice is the knowledge that, somewhere in heaven, another cherubim has the task of remembering the names of all the cherubim. A personal god gives him the courage he needed.

A few years ago, I had a triple by-pass, and I was wondering if I would have courage if I had to experience the moment God asked me to release my spirit fully into His hands. That was not my time, but I think that question looms large for all of us. This, for me, was, is, and shall be, the moment when everything gets really personal!

So, as I read in Isaiah 40 and Psalm 147 about God knowing the names of each and every star, the whole idea of my relationship with God being a personal one on both sides takes on great significance. This is the Gospel, the good news! God is not

indifferent nor has so many things on His mind that I don't matter. For God, as for me, the existence of my spirit is personal.

Paul says that he became all things to all people that, by all means, he might save some. This is more than clever preaching, speaking to varied points of view. Paul offers his very identity. To "become all things to all people," Paul had to leave his comfort zone of being a Jew, a Pharisee and an intellectual: strong, male, and entitled. In this, Paul followed the example of Jesus, who could kneel to wash the feet of his disciples and who could look at a woman caught in the very act of sin and, sinless Himself, refuse to cast a stone. In fact, on the Cross, Jesus took her sin personally!

In the Gospel passage, we see Jesus taking Simon's sick mother-in-law by the hand and she is healed. That's why I chose "He Touched Me," as the Communion hymn today even though it does not mention bread or wine. In Communion, Jesus touches me, personally, and -- like Simon's mom -- I am enabled to get up and serve him.

So, I will encourage you today. If you have not yet made faith personal, do it now. When the bread and the cup come to you, it is for you personally from the Living God, who takes your life very personally! If you have already made this personal decision, make it again, and renew it constantly.

When we say, “Jesus is my personal Lord and Savior,” we sum up the whole Gospel. Let’ do this once again. Amen.