

After first starting to do this whole pastor thing, one of the expectations I was most nervous about was the children's sermon, oddly enough: trying to come up with something that would be, at least, somewhat interesting for whatever variety of age group that might show up that Sunday morning. Not to mention, no matter how much preparation is done ahead of time, still having to be prepared for anything because well, sometimes, children say the darndest things. And then, to make matters even more interesting when I first attempted to do the whole children's sermon adventure on a regular basis; to make those few minutes of worship even more interesting, there was Trey. I know the term may be a bit over the top in its political corrected-ness, but I think there is something to it in connecting with Trey. He was differently…advantaged.

Now, although Trey, was in his teenage years when I first came along, he was already a true Lutheran, sitting at the exact same spot every Sunday he was there with his grandmother. Second pew from the front, on the lectern side, at the end by the wall; so that, when the "Amen" was spoken to conclude the opening prayer of the day, Trey would dart up the steps to get two boxes behind the lectern to help with the children's sermon…every single time he was there. The first box was to collect the offering from the young people who would venture up to join Trey and myself. The other box to make sure everyone got a little snack before they went back to their seats. But for Trey, a different advantage he had in comparison to the rest of us supposedly normal churchgoers, is that I like to think that second box wasn't about sugary intakes that children seemed to crave, or it's become another form of "just the way we do things around here." No, I always clung to the idea that Trey was doing his own personal ministry in those rather few, but holy split-seconds; when some children started to walk away without getting the snack, as if they didn't know "it's just the way we do things around here." Trey would rush down to them before they got away, back to the worship normalcy, back to their routine spot; because Trey's life was anything but normal. Not because he didn't always have the same mental advantages as others and sometimes was unfortunately made aware of that by others; but also, because Trey tragically lost his father years before. His mother had to work weekends to make ends meet, and so in comes the grandmother to bring him, not out of routine, but because Trey had a holy advantage of making sure every child felt included in a small gift as a rather miniscule, but important for him token of God's never-ending love for them. The second box was not a supply of sugar for Trey: it was a storehouse of making sure the youngest of life feel as if the church and God thoroughly cherished them being here.

Trey didn't stop there, though. For the sharing of the peace, yes, he tried to get to everyone in the room, but everyone he got to, he insisted they also shake his grandmother's hand, too. As a reminder of an even more awe-inspiring loving bond that managed to thrive from an end of a precious family life that happened far too soon. It wasn't just in Trey's heart and mind that he wanted to grab hold of another advantage of the church being a second family of sorts, Trey had to be extra sure that his grandmother felt included on the extra love, too.

That would be more than enough Gospel witnessing for the supposedly normal churchgoers, but not for Trey. What we did next would probably make every Lutheran altar guild professional blush, perhaps breaking every single rule taught by liturgy professors in the entire history of Christendom. But, whenever he was there, right after he was done shaking everyone's hands for the peace, he would come up to side room by the altar area with me and we would wash our hands, and together we would setup

Communion. Then, he would mimic the chanting and the speaking, as if he just wanted to be a part of another holy giving from up front: to be sure everyone felt included on the love and the grace and the mercy and the forgiveness and the hope; because there was a time in Trey's life when he wondered it was all ripped away from him, and then he somehow found out that it wasn't. Trey couldn't help himself but crave to be a part of that rather holy distribution.

As for that first box with the children's sermon, the first thing Trey got his hands on, and initiated all his Gospel witnessing, by giving the youth a chance to hand in their offering that week; Trey, himself, would usually just give a dollar. He obviously didn't make much of an impact on our general fund or operating budget, but truly I tell you, Trey shattered our spiritual bank. I didn't always know if I would ever experience anything first-hand with the prophet Amos' call from God to do away with the normal festivals, for the routine solemn assemblies. Trey unleashed a different advantage from his life experience with Jesus Christ that no seminary training ever envisioned. Granted, there are moments for solemnity in our respective faith journey, too, including when losing a loved one far too soon; but when a teenage boy manages to rise up with a Resurrection joy as if God cherishes him to his core, and even insists he has something breath-taking to offer even if the world often dissuades him otherwise; when Trey beautifully messed with the routine, I wondered if Amos' vision was being fulfilled even to a level that the prophet never considered.

That also isn't to say Communion festival celebrating is ever normal, as God will more than manage to meet people where they are over and over again, but when Trey felt a spiritual nudge to join in to be behind the altar, where only the high and mighty pastors were ever dare supposed to be, he made us all realize what it was all for, in case we supposedly normal worshipers ever lost sight of it. This is never just for our own spiritual nourishment, but to remember the streams of God's mercy operation will reach to shores we're even slightly hesitant to go ourselves, including to those who wonder if they deserve it at all. No, Trey, didn't make it the body and blood of Christ (pastors don't either anyway) but he did have a way of making it come to life all the more. And he just might have stewarded his gifts to overflow the spiritual banks of everyone who was blessed to witness his holiest disruption. And so, for all the ways the Divine insists on making all children of God believe they have a holy something to share with the world, thanks be to God, indeed! Amen!