

Where's My Supersuit?

1 Corinthians 12:4-31

This past week I got to do a few of my most favorite things, and one of them is: attend a meeting at which I had absolutely no responsibility to do or say anything. I love getting to go to meetings, not only because important things happen for our church, but because I get to see first-hand some of you doing what you love and know.

This happens at Finance meetings when some of our team members start talking about the economy and the earnings statements and percentages that make no sense to me until they unpack things in a way that makes everything seem very clear. This happens at Trustees meetings when folks who understand dry spells and programming sprinkler needs talk or conversation emerges about needing yellow paint applied to steps comes up and different methods, timing, and products are considered. Or at the Associate Minister Search Committee when Andrea Goodwin and Chris Chandler put together a presentation with graphs, flow charts, and systematic explanations that detail how the process got from Point A to Point Z and I just can't respond with anything but "Wow!"

It is a great joy for me to sit back and learn from you all and see the ways you come alive doing what you do best! We all have things that come naturally to us. Our gifts are often the things we take for granted because we assume that if we can do it then so can everyone else. Whether a firefighter gently talking about carrying people to safety or a lawyer describing a defense strategy or a stay at home parent talking about the plan for the week with the outings...it is fascinating to me to get to observe ordinary people letting their superpowers shine, as we do what we've been created to do.

You've experienced this too – seeing professional athletes play a game that looks so easy that it seems we too should be able to sail through the air and dunk a basketball or a ballerina dancing across the floor with grace that leaves you speechless or observing an actor tell a story with such passion that you weep or hearing musicians sing *"Shall We Gather at the River and Deep River"* in tones that make your soul reverberate...we've seen some superpowers in action alright!

Our movie for this week, the *Incredibles 2*, just released in June 2018, features a family and several others who have very particular superpowers that others in society do not have. There's some question, however, about whether being Super is really okay. In fact, the Incredibles family is in a Supers protection program for a bit, hiding their true selves so the world cannot see. A campaign is launched to rebrand Superheroes as contributing members of society, but that effort gets hijacked. The parents want to protect the kids. The dad tries to not use his superpowers and instead tend to the child-rearing, which is definitely NOT his gift.

In the end, it takes each one doing what only they can do to rescue the parents and save the day. Each one chooses to take a risk, step out of their comfort zone, and do what only they could do, and allow the others to do the same, even when they had written them off because of lack of experience or age.

One of my most favorite and also a pretty intimidating verse comes in John chapter 14 verse 12; when Jesus tells his disciples, *"Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father."*

GREATER WORKS THAN JESUS? What the what? In the middle of his farewell speech with the disciples, he tells them that he was going to prepare a place for them and that the Holy Spirit would remain with them...all well and good, and then. WHAM! You are expected to use your gifts. Some are healers, some are teachers, some are preachers, some are the community organizers, some are the political activists, some are the nurturers...whatever your gifts are; they are gifts to be used. So, get to work!

Sometimes well intended humility can end up diminishing our confidence and even calling, if we let it. I have been very impressed by the people of PRCC because you all take ministry seriously as a congregation. This is a congregationally led church, and not only do you meet to vote on your ministers and have all the important meetings, you take participating in the ministries of the church seriously. Some of us could use a new invitation today though: if you are not currently plugged into using the gifts God has given you, we want to get you connected.

We have ministry teams serving the homeless, caring for seniors, Stephen Ministers offering meaningful covenantal care, opportunities to teach Sunday School, work with our youth team, reach out to new members, care for our resources...and the list goes on and on. We want you to be able to serve where you get joy from that service. There's nothing like being mismatched!! If you don't enjoy greeting people, you should not be on our welcome team. But, if you love creating and designing marketing materials, and you dream of ways to help reach out to our community, we absolutely need you!

One of the portions of Pastor Mollie's interview process that really endears her to me is her certainty of call. She's had her calling tested and challenged, and she confidently told me and members of our Committee that she has felt the undeniable, all-encompassing call of God to be an ordained pastor. She loves serving on a team and has felt called to be an associate for quite a while, and one of the most important elements of that call is meaningful engagement with and leadership of youth.

Praise be to God! That sounds like what the Board articulated at the beginning of the search as what we hoped to find in a candidate.

The church in Corinth was struggling with competition and comparison – there were some who thought their spiritual gift was superior to others' and others who felt they were not as gifted if they were not the ones speaking in tongues or preaching. Paul sought to straighten them out! We are all different! Some of you can lead youth and others are good with finance, some of you are dedicated prayer warriors! You don't have to do it all, but you do have to work together! What a relief because you need each other! One set of gifts isn't better, it just means that the work looks different. (And) what a blessing that it is the same God who has gifted each one.

In *the Incredibles* movies, each character had to ascertain what it was that they were created to do, and some of their superpowers evolved and changed over time. As they realized their own strengths, they could build on one another, offering what they alone had to give, and allow it to change the world for good. They needed to not discount anyone because of any perceived difference, and instead welcome one another to the shared work.

What do you have to give? What new gifts and strengths have emerged in your wheelhouse? Don't hide behind a mask, but instead hear the invitation to allow the protection and affirmation of God to prepare you to live fully into those gifts and talents.

Our world is riddled with evil and injustice. Instead of the villains of the movies, we have systems that are broken and need repair... We have people starving in a world that has more than enough food... We have illnesses in need of treatment... We have empty rhetoric when we need thoughtful action... We have centuries of oppression and prejudice and we need clear eyes of equality and advocacy for the most vulnerable.

(And,) God is calling us – you and I - to use the gifts we've been given to right what is wrong, to work together, and right here, right now to build the Kin-dom of God for all God's beautiful children. May it be so. Amen.