New Deliverance Church
11200 SOUTH STATE STREET - CHICAGO, IL 60628
TELEPHONE: 773-785-7476
REV. MARTY C. GOOL, PASTOR

Pastor's Corner

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His Ways Are Above Our Ways

Isaiah 55:8-9 and Romans 8:28

God is in control. Even today God is in control. In the midst of seeming chaos, God is in control. When we make mistakes. God is in control. When we fail to follow God, God is in control. God is always leading us somewhere to some ultimate good that we cannot see. God's wisdom and insight is so far beyond us that we often are unable to see the connection. Just remember regardless of what happens good or not good; things we want to happen, things we do not want to happen - God is in control.

On January 20, 2016, a country elected a president that would begin his reign of terror over the entire nation. The fear of being shamed and bullied quieted most if not all would be critics. Very few believed there was much that anyone could do. This man was in charge of the Department of Defense and had investigative powers that traverse into both public and private spaces. This country began to understand how fragile we really are. We began to realize how vulnerable we are to the whims and wishes of destructive people. We thought we were a strong country. We thought we were a country of laws. We thought we were bound by a constitution that guided our legal and judicial behavior. Little did we believe that the president that this country elected would become a rogue and a pirate.

So much was done by this president and his followers that fostered fear and hopelessness. We became a country that began to turn on itself for a while. God has a way of stepping in and turning things around. When all seemed lost the protests began to mount. People began to believe in each other again. People began to see hope in themselves and the possibility that things do not have to be the way they are presently. We began to look at ourselves through different eyes, a new lens.

The following story speaks how faith in a person, faith in a country can change for the better. It tells that even that which begins on solid foundation can be turned around by tragedy or poor decisions. This story also is a symbol of how faith in a person can become the needed spark to turn lives around. It speaks to how a country who began to believe with Faith and Prayer, God could and would change things. It speaks to the truth that faith is more powerful than doubt. That if you impart in a person or people great things can happen. A difference can be made. It demonstrates how those who feel impotent can be empowered. Empowered to such a degree that a life and a society can be transformed. It tells us how the people who had been left out, forgotten, and ignored began to be included and made to believe in themselves. How those who had no voice found a voice and shouted from their hearts to the highest citadels in the nation that injustice would no longer be tolerated, or wrong swept under the rug.

I hope this story will give each of you the desire to continue to impart faith and confidence in others. You are the catalyst; you are the spark that lights the fire within others. When I read this story, I realize that hopelessness can change to hope - that the lost can be found. That the difficult challenges that we face can be overcome. It requires a faith in God and in each other. A quest to do justice and walk humbly with our God.

This story is dedicated to all the Mrs. Thompsons' in the world who have turned lives around and turned this country around in 2020:

As she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children an untruth. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. However, that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard. Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he did not play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. In addition, Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers.

At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise.

Teddy's first-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners…he is a joy to be around." His second-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle." His third-grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken." Teddy's fourth-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and he sometimes slept in class."

By, now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other present. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one-quarter full of perfume. But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to." After the children left, she cried for at least an hour. On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children. Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets."

A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life. Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he had ever had in life. Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favorite teacher he had ever had in his whole life.

Then four more years passed, and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favorite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer…The letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story does not end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he had met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit at the wedding in the place that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom.

Of course, Mrs. Thompson did. And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestone missing. Moreover, she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together.

They hugged each other, and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference." Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you."

We didn't know how powerful we were as a nation until Donald Trump. Thank you, Lord, for the test. Thank you for the grace given to pass it. We cannot rest, we cannot get comfortable. We have only fought a battle. The war is about to begin. We must continue to be vigilant. Let us not forget, God is in charge. He led us through the battle. God will lead us through the war.

God Bless and remain safe,

Pastor Gool