

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Pray with me. Let the words of my mouth, the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight. Oh God, you alone are my rock and my most blessed Redeemer. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

I indeed honor the spirit of Christ who is indeed the center of my life. Major love, again, to this amazing music ministry, to Reverend Potts, and the entire ministerial staff of this church. And to all of you, God's people, I count it an honor to stand before you today, especially to the families of these three amazing babies. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

And lastly, but certainly not least, you all who know Reverend Jones by now should know what I'm about to say. I am because of this amazing woman, the sweet potato to my sweet potato pie, my wife, Alea.

(Singing) I am what God says I am. I can be who God says I can be. I am. I can be all that God says I can be. Be all that God says I can be.

For the time that I have with you, I would like to place a tag upon the lessons that have been read. I am somebody. You are somebody. Beloved, God specializes in using people like you and me. God specializes in using people who have been written off. God specializes in using people who feel as if they are not good enough. You are somebody. I am somebody. We are somebody. God specializes in using persons who feel as if their circumstances or situations are antithetical to the purpose that God has for their lives. God specializes in using people like you and me. God specializes in using people who think that they're not good enough or that they have a bad past. God specializes in using those who have made mistakes, and those who are not perfect. Come on somebody.

God specializes in using people like you and me. I am somebody. You are somebody. We, all of God's children, are somebody. If you don't believe me, can I call the role of Reverend Alanna? Can I call the role of Reverend Potts?

The Bible talks about people who are somebody, even when it seems like society tries to write them off. Abraham was old in age, but he was the father of faith. Noah had problems with drinking, but he built an arc. Jonah ran from God, but he saved the

people from Nineveh. David had commitment issues, but his heart was after God. I am somebody. You are somebody. All of God's children are somebody.

Gideon was insecure, but he became a judge. Miriam was a gossip, but she sang God's praises. Martha was a worrier, but she pondered the words of God in her heart. Thomas. Oh yeah, don't you remember Thomas, Cheyenne? Thomas was a doubter, but he became an apostle. Sarah was impatient, but she brought forth life. Elijah was moody, y'all don't want to talk, but he prophesied. Moses questioned his ability because of his speech, but he interceded for Israel. Lazarus was dead. But one day Jesus stopped by and Lazarus was resurrected out of a dead tomb. I am somebody. You are somebody. All of God's children in this room, you are somebody.

No matter what you have done, no matter who you have been, God is able to use you. No matter what religious people have said, no matter what institutionalized religion has said, you are somebody. Beloved, I want you to know, that there were times in my life that I was trapped by the spirit of religion in the south where I thought I could not be perfect. Come on somebody. I thought that I could not make mistakes. I did not love all of me, but I want you to know that one day when I met the God of love, I found out that I was somebody.

And I want you to know there are things that we all have done in our lives that we are not proud of. I don't know about you, but I didn't come out of my mother's womb, proclaiming the world of God. I didn't come out of my mother's womb, speaking in heavenly tongues, or singing the hymns and anthems. But I have made some mistakes in my life. I have been insecure. I have battled some things. But when you come in touch with the love of Jesus, when you come in touch with the love of God, you find out that you are somebody. That the blood that flows to your veins is the divinity of Christ.

I don't care what you have done. No matter where you have been on life's journey, you are somebody. I know we've said things that we're not proud of. Even as an institution, this past week we found out that we have a legacy of slavery. We've done things that we're not proud of, but we are still somebody. We still can come together and look to the hills from which cometh our help and say, "I know what we did yesterday, but tomorrow we're going to be an institution of love. Tomorrow, we will become an institution where all of God's people are valued. We are somebody.

I am somebody, no matter what people say about you, and you, and you, you have to go to the chambers of your heart and remember that there is a God who loves you. There is a God who honors you. That is what the resurrected Christ is all about. And I promise you, we're getting ready to baptize these babies, and I'm going to take my seat.

In the text today, we see a resurrected Christ, who has indeed loved two individuals. In the gospel reading, Jesus has been making a few appearances. And in John 20, he appears to the disciples behind locked doors. And in this chapter, Jesus appears to the disciples as they are fishing. And they have apparently been fishing all night long and they have not caught anything. However, Jesus stops by to remind Peter, that you are somebody.

Do you remember Peter? The one who promised to remain steadfast in the upper room, but he said some not so pleasant words, when it came down to see if he really was affiliated with Christ. Peter, the one who denied Christ three times. But despite his failure, Jesus calls Peter three times. That's what was so beautifully read. He says, "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?" And in my homiletic imagination, Matt, I believe that Jesus said it three times because he remembered that Peter denied him three times. I know that you denied me three times Peter, but let me call you three times, to remind you that you are somebody. That my love is eternal. That my love never fails. You are somebody. He reminds Peter, that no matter what you've done, I love you.

Then we heard the other reading by Saul, the one who is passionate, who thought that he was doing what was right, persecuting the people of the way. But one day, regardless of what he had done, the horrors that he had committed. And I don't know about you, but sometimes as church people, it's hard to forgive. It's hard to extend that same amount of love.

But Christ shows up on the road to Damascus. And what does he do? Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Let me re-give you another revelation. Paul begins to see in another way. Although he was physically blind, his theological cataracts fell off. The way he had been treating people, because they were different. The way he had been treating people, because they were on the margins. God comes along and removes the scales off of his eyes and says, "Even though you've done wrong, you're still somebody." And he begins to walk in a new direction.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

I want you to repeat after me and say, I.

Congregation:

I.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Am.

Congregation:

Am.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

Somebody.

Congregation:

Somebody.

The Rev. Calvin Jones:

There is a resurrected Christ, that specializes in using people like you and me. To the church school teachers who are about to graduate, who I've had the privilege to work with, I want you to know that you are somebody. That our future is brighter because of your tenacity. Our future is brighter because of your heart. The future of the church is not lost, because you have given your all in this space.

To those who work at Harvard, to those who are in this space called the Memorial community, the future is brighter, because you are somebody. And because you are somebody, God has given you the unction to tell somebody else that they are somebody. That person, who's on the verge of giving up, you have the power to tell them, they are somebody. That person who feels as if they cannot make it, you have the power to tell them, they are somebody.

And as I go to my seat, I know right now in the world, it looks dark. I know, as we are navigating these waters after the pandemic, it still feels as if we're trying to walk and be who God wants us to be. But even though we are living in some dark times, I come to tell you that God specializes, even in darkness. That no matter how dark it is right now, I still believe, that God can move and remind you that you are somebody. No matter how dark the situation, remember that God specializes in darkness.

When the earth was formless and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, Jesus, God was hovering over the waters. It was at night, in the dark, when Jacob had a dream of a stairway that reached earth to heaven, God specializes, even in dark moments. It was at night, when the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and they crossed the Red Sea, God specializes in dark moments. It was at night, when manana came down from heaven on the camp with the dew during the night, God specializes, even in dark moments. It was at night, when Nicodemus came to Jesus, wanting and wanting to know, how can I be free? It was at night, when Paul in silence praying, and the chains fell. I don't know who I'm talking to this morning, but you are somebody, even in the darkest parts of your life.

(Singing) Remember, I can, I will, be all that God says I can be. Be all that God says, I can be.