

Last Sunday most of America gathered around their TVs and watched Tom Brady and the Patriots win the Super Bowl.....once again.

And both before and after the game we heard, over and over, how Brady is maybe the greatest QB of all time.

In a few weeks will be the annual Academy Awards to honor the best movies, etc. It's enough to sometimes make everyone else feel like 'I guess I'm not that good'.

But the losing quarterback in the Super Bowl was great in his second professional year. And there are 30 other starting quarterbacks in the NFL and many are very good. And there are very many good movies that didn't get nominated for an Oscar. In sports and entertainment and other areas we tend to glorify and lift up the very best. Because of that all others who are not so perfect can feel somewhat less worthy.

The same thing can be true with all of us,....not just in sports or film,...but in life. We can tend to think less of ourselves and, consequently, limit our ambitions or goals. That can be especially true when it comes to religion and the idea of righteousness. But I want to tell you something right now;.... **you're better than you think you are.** Oh, I don't know about your sports or acting skills,..... but I mean **as a child of God.**

We heard a couple stories today of how people can downgrade themselves. Diminish themselves in relation to the total holiness that we attribute to God/Jesus. But God says to them,... 'I still want you cause you're better than you think you are'. In fact, God even ends up making them better than they were to begin with.

First there is the prophet, Isaiah, whom the Lord wants to enlist to speak for him. Isaiah sees of all this holiness that surrounded the Lord and then looks at himself. Because he wasn't perfect, he felt it was wrong to even be in the presence of the Lord. He says "*Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!*"

In a second story, we hear of Simon/Peter and his co-workers out doing their jobs. These fishermen have finished a night's work as Jesus comes to speak to the crowds. And when Jesus performs this miracle of enabling them to catch loads of fish,.... Peter realizes that he is in company with divinity and, consequently, he feels terrible. Because he sees himself as "a sinful man" he feels unworthy and is afraid to even be in Jesus' presence and so he asks Jesus to go away from him.

But in both instances, God dismisses their self-deprecating attitudes and uses them. In doing so, God forgives them of whatever wrongs they had in their history. In Isaiah's case we heard how the seraph touched his lips with a hot ember and thereby purified Isaiah and purified all that he would say in the Lord's name. In Peter's case, Jesus basically forgives and dismisses his sins and put him to work as his main gatherer of people who will come and follow Jesus.

God saw in them both a goodness and gifts that they never saw or knew they had. In fact, once they were willing to start working with God, then God actually helped make them become better people and better workers of his. Consequently....Isaiah ends up being maybe the most important prophet of God. And Peter, ends up being the most significantly disciple of the original twelve.

Maybe the best example we have is what we read today from 1st Corinthians. The apostle Paul is passing on to others his message of Jesus that he received. As he writes of Jesus' resurrection, he describes himself as..."*the least of the apostles, unfit to be called to be an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God*".

But then he adds that... *"But for the grace of God, I am what I am"*.

Meaning, despite his undeniable wrongs against the Lord, God has forgiven him and then gone on to use Paul to do even more than all the rest of the disciples.

Isaiah and Peter and the apostle Paul are just a few of the biblical characters like this.

Virtually everyone that God has used in history are what you'd call flawed individuals. Yet,, they were not as bad and, were in fact, better people than they thought they were.

Even more so, God pardons any of their flaws and consequently makes them better.

The same is true with us.

We are better than any denigration our parents, teachers, former bosses or colleagues, or we ourselves have thought or said to make us feel less than worthy.

And, when it comes to righteousness, even churches themselves or clergy or uber religious people can sometimes make us feel like Isaiah or Peter did.

But if Tom Brady is quarterback perfection,...then Jesus is who we'd call the greatest.

And nobody, no matter how religious they look or act, can meet that standard.

So we have to remember first, that we are better than we or others think.

And secondly, that despite any sins, God, in Jesus Christ, forgives us.

Forgives us and says that you are better than you think and, when you work with me, I will work to make you even better so together we can make this world a better place.

Amen