

"You Matter!"
Isaiah 58:1-11; Matthew 5:13-20

Rev. Kenneth M. Locke, Pastor/Head of Staff
First Presbyterian Church, Fond du Lac, WI
February 5, 2023; Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

I'm sure most of us are familiar with Harry Potter. Even if you've never read the books or seen the movies, you know they're about a young wizard and his various trials and tribulations. Most of the stories are set at his school: Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Personally, I like them. The characters are well drawn, and the stories are fantastically creative. But I think the author's greatest achievement is convincing an entire generation of Americans life in a British school is fun. It's all quirky teachers and cool subjects and quidditch matches and "Ten-points for Gryffindor."

In reality, and I say this because I used to be a student at a British school, life in a British school is a lot more like Pink Floyd's "The Wall." Harsh discipline. Stultifying sameness. Students ground down by the academic system. Just so many bricks in the wall. Nothing more than cogs on a wheel.

Do you ever feel that way? Do you ever wonder if you matter? 'Am I important? Am I just a cog on the wheel, another brick in the wall?' Do you matter?

If we were hit by a bus tomorrow, what would happen? There would be some panic. There would be tears. But soon, another teacher would take our class. Another sales rep. would service our clients. Someone else would enter the pickleball tournament in our place. Our circle of friends would adjust.

And here at church, someone else would step up and be an usher. Someone else would volunteer to make coffee for Fellowship Time. Some kind soul would agree to serve our term on the session or the deacons, or take our spot managing the Angel Tree, or keeping the heaters running.

I don't mean to be Debby Downer. Honestly, I don't. But we all know none of us are irreplaceable. We all know the old saying, graveyards are full of people who thought they were indispensable.

Before we get too morbid let's remember, in Jesus we are all VIPs. In Jesus we are all important. No matter our age or job or life situation, in Jesus we all matter because Jesus has given us all important jobs to do. Jesus has given us all important jobs to do.

We are all salt. We make life better. We are light, the light of the world. Our ministry is a light to everyone around us and beyond. Let your light shine!

Let your light shine not by following the letter of the law (hello, scribes and Pharisees!) but by embracing the spirit of the law. Loosening the bonds of injustice. Letting those oppressed by economic hardship or addiction go free. Feeding the hungry. Finding room for the homeless. Getting a coat for someone shivering in the cold. Not wasting our time pointing fingers at each other. We can do that all day. Speaking good news to one another, not evil.

In Jesus, we all matter. No matter where we are, no matter how we earn a living, Jesus has given us all jobs that matter. In Jesus, we all matter. This is good news!

Does Pink Floyd make you think of our church? We are a brick church out on the edge of town. And we are all bricks in it.

Where are you? Where is your brick? Are you beside the front door? Are you out back by the dumpster? Are you one of those innumerable bricks in the wall?

Friends, it doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter where we are. What matters is being the best brick we can be. Worship, give, pray, join a committee. We're all bricks in these walls. What matters is being the best brick we can be wherever we are.

The same is true for our witness. Doesn't matter where we witness. What matters is being the best witness we can be. Home, school, work, volunteering, playing pickleball at the Y. It doesn't matter.

What matters is being salt. Being light. Loosening the bonds of injustice. Letting the oppressed go free. Feeding the hungry. Finding a hat, coat and mittens for those caught in the cold.

Pink Floyd paints a pretty dismal view of life. In some ways, yes, we are all cogs in the machine. We are all bricks in the wall. None of us are so important we are irreplaceable.

But we also matter. You matter, and you matter, and you matter, and you matter. We all matter because God has given us important jobs to do. Whether we are by the front door, by the dumpster, or one of the bricks in the wall, let's do our ministry well. "Let your light shine before others, so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Amen.