

Series: It's a Seussical Life: Discovering Creative Ways to Live as God's Kids

Sermon #3: "You Are Enough, Plain and Simple!"

Books: *Gertrude McFuzz* (second story in *Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories*)

Scripture: Matthew 6:28-34 (Do not worry about what you shall wear)

Psalm 139:13-18 (I am fearfully and wonderfully made)

Text: Isaiah 43:1 "But now, this is what the LORD says—He who created you, He who formed you:

'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.'"

Theme: You are enough, and God has made you wonderful!

Sermon Blurb: Mark Twain said, "Comparison is the death of joy." Yet we all do it...all the time!

And we suffer the loss of our joy because of it. It's an epidemic in our culture! This Sunday, we'll look at Dr. Seuss' *Gertrude McFuzz* to see the foolish ways we compare ourselves to others. But that's not the end of it: we'll then hear God's loud declaration that you are enough! Don't miss this Sunday when we discover our true worth.

Gathering Song: *Forever Reign*

Welcome: Pastor David

Worship Set: -Sanctify

This Is My Father's World

No Longer Slaves

The Same Love

Worship prayer: Andrew

Book Reading: "Gertrude McFuzz" - Becca

Kids to Kid's Church

Prayers & Offering: Andrew

Song: *Your Love Is Strong*

Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Scripture: Matthew 6:28-34

Message: "You Are Enough, Plain and Simple!"

PP#1: It's a Seussical Life: Discovering Creative Ways to Live as God's Kids

"You Are Enough, Plain and Simple!"

Isaiah 43:1 "But now, this is what the LORD says—He who created you, Jacob, He who formed you, Israel: 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.'"

It's a Seussical Life: Discovering Creative Ways to Live as God's Kids. Gertrude McFuzz: You are Enough, Plain and Simple. Isaiah 43:1 "But now, this is what the LORD says—He who created you, Jacob, He who formed you, Israel: 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.'"

PP#2: *Image of Gertrude McFuzz looking back jealously at Lolla-Lee-Lou's two tail feathers.*

Dang that Lolla-Lee-Lou! How can she do all that so well? She's so together! She's where she needs to be, she says the right things to the right people, her schedule seems to have everything fit perfectly. She attends the things I just can't seem to get to. Her kids do well in school, are part of those enriching extracurricular activities, and always seem to be in front. They eat healthy, homemade food, always around the dinner table. Their clothes are always stylish and neat. And they spend quality time with special friends. Her house is clean, her yard is trimmed, and she just got that promotion at work. She has Mr. Perfect as her husband. *And* she went mud-wrestling again...man that looks so fun! How does she do it? And, no matter what she does, or where she goes, *she always looks good*. Dang, I hate most how she always looks so good!

Who's your Lolla-Lee-Lou?

Or do you see her in various ways all over the place?

PP#3: *Image of a person hiding behind a mask.*

Dr. Seuss' *Gertrude McFuzz* is a story about all of us. You see, there's a Gertrude McFuzz in each of us. It's that inner insecurity that gnaws at us, that inadequacy that lurks in the shadows, that fear that at some point, they'll find out that actually we're not who they think we are.

PP#4: "Comparison is the death of joy." -Mark Twain

One of the most self-destructing games we all play is the game of comparison. You play it. I do. All the time. It's nearly impossible not to. We compare...evaluate...rank. But based on what? Compared to what? It's a game of impossible standards that's rigged to make sure we lose.

It's like going into a casino...after all, every casino is required to publish it's average payout. Usually it's somewhere around 90%. That means that, on average, for every \$100 you pay in, it will pay you \$90 back. It's rigged against you. You may get lucky once in a while and win here or there. But over time, over play, you will lose 10%. And if you try to press your luck, and give it the \$90, it will give you back \$81.

Comparison whispers in our ears that it show us our value, but in reality, it feeds on our joy, and consumes it!

PP#5: You are Enough, Plain and Simple

1. When you play the game of comparison, you will lose

We always lose the comparison game. We lose because most times, when we compare, we compare our weaknesses against other people's strengths. I can't play piano, but she sure is good. I wish I could, but I can't. I lose.

We compare our compiled failures against other individual successes. That person has three snowmobiles. And that person has a killer golf game. That person has the perfect yard. And that person always wins fantasy football! I don't have any of those things...I lose. This is particularly true when we compare our possessions. It seems wherever we go, there are people who have more of something. And so we never feel we have enough. We always find people with more. But what we fail to notice is that the person who may have three snowmobiles doesn't also go on three week vacations to the Caribbean, or have box seat season tickets to the Vikings, or have a new car. Yet we compare our same selves with each different one of them, feeling that we lose.

So, we try to find something that we can take pride in. Well, I do have a self-designed home, or my son just got the new promotion. We find something we can hang on to when we compare

ourselves to others. But we lose again, because what we hold on to doesn't last. My new car gets old. My golf game begins to slide. And wherever we look, there are people who are brighter, stronger, faster, smarter, younger, and better than we are...even about the things we have or are good at! We can't hold on to what we're better at. It's just a matter of time...and we lose.

We lose because in comparison, we place value by our rank. Our sense of identity and worth is linked by how good we are *relative*, or what we have, or what we control. But that just means that our value is on a sliding scale, a moving target. We can't keep up. Oh, we may for a time, but before long, it begins to slip, and the tighter we try to hold on to it, it begins to slip through our fingers.

We lose because when we play the game of comparison, we accept the premise that it can tell us who we are. We've been playing this game since childhood. We want to learn more about ourselves, to define who we are, where our value comes from. So we look around and compare and contrast. We rank: him above her, and her above me, but me above him and certainly them. Yet, when we rank, we lose.

PP#6: *Image of Gertrude talking to Uncle.*

Poor Gertrude McFuzz looked around and compared her tail with Lolla-Lee-Lou's. She felt inadequate, lower, less important. She didn't feel beautiful. Her value, you see, she determined, came from her tail. And because her tail was not as good as Lolla-Lee-Lou's, or at least as she assessed the value, she was not happy.

Now her uncle, the doctor, tried to tell her that her tail was appropriate for a bird like she was. It was just right for who she was. Or, to put it in Minnesota terms, imagine peacock feathers on a loon! Although the peacock's feathers are bigger and more showy, they are not right for a loon. The loon would not be able to swim, or dive, or feed, and it would starve.

But she didn't accept that. She wanted to be like Lolla-Lee-Lou! *Then* she would be happy. Then she would feel good about herself. Her uncle realized that this was a lesson she needed to learn for herself. So he told her of those pill-berries, the ones that magically grew tail feathers.

PP#7: *Image of Gertrude with her huge tail.*

And, of course, because she believed that her rank compared to others, two feathers suddenly were not enough. She had to have *more* than Lolla-Lee-Lou. *Then*, she would be happy. But wait! She could have more than all the other birds. Then more than *any* bird could ever have. *Then*, what joy she could have!

But, comparison was the death of her joy. As we heard the story, her massive tail prohibited her from flying. She was very embarrassed, and in the end (pun intended!) they had to pluck out all the extra tail feathers—ouch, what pain!

Finally, Gertrude learns the secret of happiness: it's being content with who you are, how you are made, and that seeing your value does not come from what you have, or what you can do, compared to others.

PP#8: You are Enough, Plain and Simple

1. When you play the game of comparison, you will lose
2. Your value comes from the One who made you: Just right!

And it's here that we connect with a truth revealed by the Bible. Our world may say it as, "just be happy with who you are." But it doesn't tell us *why*. That's why we need the Bible. We need to hear God's words of why we *can be* happy with who we are. It's not just a decision we chose to believe: I declare bald-headed men handsome! It's a value that is handed down to from outside ourselves, it's declared about us, to us, over us.

God's declaration is recorded as lasting, solid, unchanging truth: you are wonderful! You are valuable! You are precious!

And the treasure here is that this comes not from comparison. God doesn't look at us and say, "You are better than him." It comes from looking deeply at just us. It keeps our eyes from that destructive comparison. Feel the gaze, just at you...no, not to the right or to the left...just at you. It settles there. And hear the proclamation: wonderful!

It's a value that comes from the Maker, the Creator, the only one whose value truly counts. Can you hear it? You are wonderful! God made you, just right, even if you are plain or simple. Isaiah 43:1 "But now, this is what the LORD says—He who created you, He who formed you: 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.'"

Yes, you've made mistakes. Yes, you're not all that you can be. Yes, God wants you to grow and improve. But don't miss this grounding truth: you are wonderful! Your value doesn't come from what you have or don't have, from what you've done or not done, or from what your potential is. It comes from you being a creation by the Creator who declares you beautiful! A Picasso can't compare itself to a Rembrandt. They are so different. But each is declared beautiful in its own right.

That's you. You are beautiful in your own right. Can you hear that? Your value doesn't come from who you are. It comes from *whose* you are. Yes, you may be chipped or cracked. But that does not determine your value. Your value comes from the One who holds you.

PP#9: *Image of my pumpkin candle*



I want to show you something I've treasured for a very long time. It's a little candle that my mother gave me 40 years ago, when I was seven. She was an important big-wig with the United Methodist Women, and she was flying all over the country. During October, she went somewhere out east. And she brought me back a little Halloween candle of a scarecrow with a jack-o-lantern head. No big thing, really, but I fell in love with it. You see, while she was out there meeting with dignitaries from all over and in important meetings, she thought about me. She thought I would like it, and brought it back for me.

Mom, do you remember this?

Now, it only cost 10 cents to start with. And over the years it's gotten pretty beat up. I've had to re-glue the head back on. I've repainted it. If it were in mint condition, it might be worth about \$20. But my guy's monetary value is about what my mother originally paid for it! However, to me, it is one of my most treasured possessions. I've had many valuable things—worth thousands of dollars—come and go, but I keep pretty tight hold on this little guy.

Why? Because it is important to me. I love it. I value it. It's beat up, but to me it's value is priceless.

God holds you in His hand, perhaps cracked, dented, repainted. But your value comes from His assessment of you.

And, as important as this *thing* is to me, I would trade it in a heartbeat for my son, even when he's rude, smelly, crabby, and has made all kinds of rotten decisions.

How much more valuable are you to God when He looks at you! It doesn't matter what you have, or what you've done. He made you, and He sees in you what He created. That is still true about you. He declares you wonderful!

PP#10: Psalm 139 (NIV)

13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psalm 139 proclaims this truth. And what I love about this Psalm is that it puts it in the first person! It is a self-declaration of what we know is true. I say that God made me wonderful! I am fearfully and wonderfully made! As God's people, we get to say this! This is true, and we proclaim it! So, rather than me reading it to you, let's capture the intention of this Psalm, and say it ourselves. Let's read it out loud together, proclaiming this truth over ourselves, who we are. OK? Proclaim this with me:

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

God's value of us comes from Him who made us, and His vision for who we are, and who we are to be. God thinks you are wonderful! Do you hear that, Church? You are fearfully and wonderfully made! And if you ever doubt it, Jesus is your proof. Jesus is God's declaration that you are worth it! You are worth dying for!

PP#11: *Gertrude and her big tail being hauled by all the other birds.*

But we can be so messed up, and have convinced ourselves of the lie, that even though God declares it, and others around us believe it, there are times we still don't always believe that we are enough. We are more like Gertrude than we care to admit! We know what it's like to try to make ourselves into something we're not. I've been there, I've worn that mask of having it all together, of being just fine. I've eaten the berries to become someone I am not; with the hope of being enough. In fact, I'll probably forget and eat the berries again. But when we eat those berries, like Gertrude, we again will find that those false feathers only hold us down.

PP#12: You are Enough, Plain and Simple

1. When you play the game of comparison, you will lose
2. Your value comes from the One who made you: Just right!
3. Others, who believe God's value of us, lift us up

It is then that we will need people like Uncle Dake and all the other birds, our family, our church family, our community, to pick us up and carry us home. They declare to us, over us, the truth we, at first, refuse to hear. We need them to remind us of the way that God sees us, to remind us of God's proclamation that says we are enough. Part of our job as God's kids is to remind others of this. So, turn to those around you, and tell them, "You are beautiful!" "You're amazing!" Go ahead. Right now: declare this truth to the people next to you. Look them in the eye and say, "You're wonderful!"

[Pause.]

They pick out the vain tail feathers for her and restore her back to the way she was supposed to be.

PP#13: You are Enough, Plain and Simple

1. When you play the game of comparison, you will lose
2. Your value comes from the One who made you: Just right!
3. Others, who believe God's value of us, lift us up
4. God can restore your intended luster

God loves you the way you are, right now. But also, God loves you too much to leave you that way. He works in you to restore you to the way He created you to be.

Some times we feel so guilty for letting those around us down, time and time again. We don't feel we can do what they need us to do. We fail at being the friend, the spouse, the parent, the child, they need us to be. And we beat ourselves up. "Failure!" we declare about ourselves. "Loser!" "Bad." "Worthless." "Ugly."

But those words aren't God's words. The fact that you have those kids means that God believes you are the parent they need. That's why He gave them to you! You can do it! No, you won't be perfect. But relax, that's what God is for. He will be the perfection they need. You just need to be who God created you to be.

God put you into connection with those friends, because you are what they need. Now you can't be *all* they need, but God has a gift for them in you. You are the child your parent needs. You are the employee your work needs. You are the gift your neighbor needs.

PP#14: *Image for how you are beautiful/enough in God's eyes.*

Remember, God places you where you need to be. Stop looking at what you can't do, and start to look at what you can do. Do that! Let the rest go. Stop trying to be who you aren't. You are good enough! Even if you are plain and simple compared to those you equate yourself to (danger!), plain and simple is just right.

PP#15-17 Matthew 6:25-34 (CEV)

25 "Therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life, what you'll eat or what you'll drink, or about your body, what you'll wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are? 27 Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? 28 And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. 29 But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these. 30 If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully,

even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, won't God do much more for you, you people of weak faith? 31 Therefore, don't worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' 32 Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore, stop worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Jesus said, Matthew 6:25-34, "Therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life, what you'll eat or what you'll drink, or about your body, what you'll wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes? 26 *Look at the birds in the sky.* They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. *Aren't you worth much more than they are?* 27 Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? 28 And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. 29 But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these. 30 If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, won't God do much more for you, you people of weak faith? 31 Therefore, don't worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' 32 Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 Instead, desire first and foremost God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore, stop worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

PP#18: *Image of Gertrude all satisfied with her little tail...final picture in the story.*

There goes Lolla-Lee-Lou. Isn't she beautiful? We can say that, admit that, with no guilt or jealousy in our voice. Lolla-Lee-Lou is beautiful just the way she is. And so are you!

“And finally, when all of the pulling was done,
Gertrude, behind her, again had just one . . .
That one little feather she had as a starter.
But now that's enough, because now she is smarter.”
Amen.

Closing Song: *Crown Him with Many Crowns*

Benediction: Pastor David