

Rev. Beth J. Costlow

6th Sunday after Pentecost/Lectionary 14/Proper 9

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

July 4, 2021

Prepared for: Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville SC

- Grandma Yrsa
 - She was my stepdad’s mom, so not related by blood, but she was my grandma!
 - An immigrant, from Denmark, her English was accented and often imperfect.
 - Nouns and verbs didn’t always agree.
 - She didn’t “look forward” to things; she’d say “I see forward.”
 - Her Ws were Vs. Wonderful became vonderful, etc.
 - She was never bothered by us teasing her about her accent. In fact, she’d often put it on even more heavily than normal just for us.
 - Like a lot of Grandmas, Grandma Yrsa was an excellent cook.
 - After a feast—whether or not she’d prepared it—she’d put down her silverware, push her plate away, and state, “I’ve had sufficient.”
 - It was her way of stating that she was stuffed!
 - It is also a tradition that still occasionally comes out in family gatherings.
- Sufficient
 - English synonyms include: acceptable, adequate, satisfactory, enough
 - None of these words carry the connotation that Grandma Yrsa gave the word.
 - Connotation vs. denotation
 - Mr. Dannenberg, 6th grade. Denotation is the dictionary definition. Connotation is the underlying meaning. Words can be synonyms (awful and awesome, terrible and terrific) but have very different underlying meanings!
 - For Grandma Yrsa, “sufficient” was far more than adequate!
- It is with Grandma Yrsa’s voice echoing in my heart that I read today’s lesson from St. Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians.
 - First, some background.
 - Though it’s told in the third person, scholars believe that this is St. Paul’s description of an encounter he had with the Savior
 - He was taken “up into Paradise” and “heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat.”

- To help him remember not to share details of what he'd seen and experienced, St. Paul was given "a thorn in the flesh," to keep him from becoming too high on himself.
 - Uncomfortable with his suffering, St. Paul begged for relief. "Three times, I appealed to the Lord,..." for relief.
 - But God said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."
- Sufficient
 - Those synonyms? Acceptable, adequate, satisfactory, enough.
 - Grandma Yrsa might have used the word differently, but St. Paul does not.
 - God's grace is enough. Grace is an acceptable, adequate, satisfactory and enough for everyone and everything.
 - Remember St. Paul was not always Christian. In fact, he had been a persecutor of the faith.
 - And today, we hear about him having an experience with God like none of us has ever had.
 - He went from being a persecutor of Christians, to becoming one of the most well-known proclaimer of God's love.
 - Even to being included in the Bible!
 - If God has sufficient grace for St. Paul, persecutor of the church, God's got enough for us everyday sinners.
- But what about that whole, "my power is made perfect in weakness," thing?
 - That thorn in the flesh that St. Paul was given? The daily suffering that he bore?
 - He stayed faithful to Jesus.
 - He kept traveling. He kept writing. Even from prison, St. Paul taught people about grace.
 - He was, in fact, the most prolific proclaimer of grace that existed in the first century!
 - It is often difficult to find faith in the midst of suffering. St. Paul did.
 - Many of you do, too.
 - Some of you are fighting cancer today. Or maybe you (or someone you love) has done so in the past.
 - Some of you have difficult relationships with those you love.
 - Some of you have financial challenges.
 - Still, you're here. That's God's power. You are God's power.