

"I Need You"

(Easter Sunday, 2010)

2 Corinthians 4:1, 6-11

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Every now and then someone phones me or comes up to me and says, "Terry, I need you to do something for me," or phones me to say "I need your help with this or that." It is a good feeling...to be needed (...though sometimes I wish fewer people had my phone number!).

During my high school years I remember I wasn't needed very much...more specifically, when it came to sports. In Gym Class (which is what it was named then) we would often divide into teams for a basketball or volleyball game. And when out on the track field, we would have a mock track meet. Two guys would be chosen as team captains. They, in turn, chose their team-mates. I would invariably be the last one chosen. Admittedly, back then I was a skinny kid who lacked the physical stamina and sports determination to be wanted on any team. But when one is the "last one standing" that can hardly be called "chosen." Not that it bothered me all that much. Yet there were times when I wished I would have been chosen sooner, on the premise that I was genuinely *needed*. It was not to be.

Throughout the centuries, the people God chooses, or *needs*, have usually been relatively few in number. By "few" I mean given the number of people from which God *could* or *can* choose...given God's "pool" of people. Out of Gideon's army of 32,000, God found only 300 whom God could use...though God may have wished for and needed more. Maybe too few believers are willing to pay the price for being *needed* by God. Perhaps what the Church... capital "C"... could use today is fewer structures and methodologies, and in their stead, more people who willingly and eagerly let the Holy Spirit take over their lives. Maybe what God and the Church need are more prayer warriors, and teaching warriors, and serving warriors, and praise warriors.

After Christ's resurrection, He once again did something exceptional. He passed on to His disciples His own mission and ministry. It was time. The Gospel of John presents an example. The Risen Christ implores Peter three times to "feed His lambs." In other words, He passes His own mission to Peter. Christ more or less says, "Go, Peter. Love My people. Care for them. Teach them. Heal their hearts. Bind their souls. Do as much as you can for them in My name" (*from John 21. Paraphrased*). In a way, Christ says to Peter, **I need you.**

Let's say you and your spouse, or you and a best friend, are struggling with a supremely tough issue, and it is about to pull you both apart. All of a sudden, one of you pauses and says to the other, "I need you." Suddenly everything changes. Three simple words spoken at an opportune time. "I need you."

In the Gospel of Matthew we read of the women appearing at the tomb. The stone is rolled away. No body rests inside. An angel appears and tells them to go tell the disciples "He has been raised..." On their way back Jesus appears to them and says, "...go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see Me" (*Mt. 28:10; Jn 20:17*). I mean...could not the Risen Christ Himself have appeared to the disciples and told them this? Of course He could have. Yet He chose to have these two women carry the news for Him. He chose to **need them.**

Then we have the story where the Risen Christ tells His followers, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (*Mt. 28:19; Luke 24:45f*). I ask again, could not Christ Himself have accomplished this, what with the power and authority He had just said was His throughout the earth? Yet He chose to **need them.**

We also have a story in the Gospel of John when Jesus appears to the disciples in the room in which they had taken refuge...the door bolted shut. Jesus speaks, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you... Receive the Holy Spirit" (*from Jn 20:21-23*). And again...could not the Risen Christ have Himself gone? Yet He chooses to **need** His followers.

We might think this unusual of Christ, but it is not. Jesus often **chooses to need others**. It is the disciples, not Jesus, who distribute the baskets of food in order to feed a hungry multitude. Though it is Jesus Who yells into the burial tomb where Lazarus lay that Lazarus should "Come out." But it is not Jesus who unbinds Lazarus. Jesus says to the people present, "Unbind him, and let him go" (*Jn. 11:38-44*). Once more Jesus chose to need the others. At dinner one evening in Lazarus' home, not long after Lazarus is raised from the dead, Jesus and His disciples are present. Martha is serving the meal. And Mary? She goes to the feet of Jesus and, as scripture tells us "...takes a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anoints Jesus' feet, and wipes them with her hair" (*Jn 12:3, adpt.*). Jesus chooses to need Mary to do this.

Back to St. Paul and today's scripture passage for a moment. Paul uses the image of Palestinian pottery to show that we are needed by Christ. He writes, "We have this treasure in jars of clay" (v. 7). The early Greek is "earthenware vessels" (*ostrakinois skeuesin*), referring to serving vessels for a specific purpose, such as a jug, a cup, a pan, or a pot. All are made of common clay—fragile and easily broken. When St. Paul uses this phrase "jars of clay" in reference to people, as he does in this passage, he has the sense of "being an instrument." So, to be God's vessel means God has chosen us to be God's instruments. Thus, God places a portion of God's treasure in us, even though we are common and fragile. In a clear way, God chooses to need us for God's work.

During His life and ministry, Jesus chose to need people to help do His ministry. And likewise, during the resurrection appearances the Risen Christ chose to need others. And dare I say each of you hopefully knows by now the Risen Christ, the Lord of all things, chooses to **need you** to carry on His mission. You and I are the Body of Christ; members of Christ. Christ now lives in each one of us. We are His partners; His treasures in jars of clay (*see 1 Cor 12:27, 6:15, 2:16; Romans 8:1; Galatians 2:20, 3:27; Hebrews 3:14, etc.*).

God needed Adam to tend the earth and be fruitful (*Gen 1:28*). God needed Noah and his family to build a huge ark (*Gen. 6*). God

needed Abraham to father a large nation (*Gen. 12:1-9*). God needed Moses to lead the people out of Egypt (*Ex. 3*). God needed the prophets to speak God's word to the people. And God needed the Son to come to earth to show most clearly who and how God is.

What I knew without question, back in High School Gym Class, was that I was really *not* needed. And that was alright. I learned from that. Today I also know without question that I do not know exactly and always what the Risen Christ needs. One thing I *do* know without question, however. **Christ needs people to work His mission. He chooses to need you and me!**

And what better feeling on earth is there than to really be needed?