

One more umbrella

March 2015

It rained in paradise. I don't know about the Garden of Eden; it probably rained there too. I'm referring to my recent trip to Key West, Florida. Two good Lutheran women, friends for thirty years, found the warmth and heat and beaches of the Keys to be a heavenly respite from Minnesota winter. Light therapy to the nth degree; it was wonderful!

But one of our seven days in paradise was rainy - an all day, slow, but steady rain. Not being willing to stay inside (you can do that in Minnesota!), we headed out shopping and sight-seeing. But first we had to stop somewhere to buy umbrellas.

The frustrating thing was that we already owned umbrellas. Several of them. We just hadn't brought one along. I have a polka-dotted umbrella I bought in Athens. A yellow one I bought in Sweden. My favorite little red one that lives in my car. Several that are so old I can't remember where I got them. But not one of them was there in Florida when I needed it. So I had to spend money on a new one. Now that I'm home, the animal print umbrella I bought in Florida will join the others on the floor in the closet.

It occurred to me that some people treat their faith like an umbrella. Not something to carry along, not something for everyday life, but something to go get in the case of emergency, a rainy day, so to speak.

"Umbrella faith" people only go to God when they're in trouble: a loved one is sick, a child is in crisis, a marriage is on the rocks. Then they begin to pray again, and attend worship, and think about God and where God is in their lives. When the crisis passes, their faith gets tossed back on the closet floor. Don't get me wrong. God will be there for you, when you come to God in times of trouble. No question about it. But that's not what faith is for - to just cover yourself on your rainy days. God wants much more for you, and from you.

God wants you to know God's love and presence every day. In every circumstance. To be so filled with God's love that it flows out of you and onto others. To know the great joy that God takes in you, as God brings you peace and freedom and purpose. In this way, faith is a way of life, not an object. It's a relationship, not just emergency care.

Lent is upon us, once again, my friends. What a gift these forty days are! Together we turn our attention to the One who loved us enough to go to the cross for us. We ask God to show us where we have fallen short. And with God's help, we recommit ourselves to this life of faith, this way of love. All day. Every day.

Pastor Susan