

Leveling Mountains
Heather Riggs
12.6.15

Name that tune!
(play from 2:00 - 2:08)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgtQa0HqDEE>

We don't like
What we don't understand
In fact it, scares us

When I first heard this line, I was struck by how incredibly profound it is. Just an amazingly inciteful statement about human nature.

... but I was also the extremely sleep deprived mother of two very small children... so maybe it wasn't "amazingly profound," but I still think it's pretty true.

People do tend to put a really high value on being "normal" because "different" is considered scary.

And we don't like being afraid. Fear usually means that things could go badly so we try to limit our interaction with scary things. Not understanding can lead to not feeling comfortable which can lead to excluding others in various ways ... well, while I'm quoting movies I think Yoda said it best:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFnFr-DOPf8>

Fear leads to anger... anger leads to hate... hate leads to suffering

That's why I think it is soooo important to remember that one of the primary messages of Christmas is the message that prefaced every Advent message delivered by the angels: **Don't be afraid.**

We live in a world that tells us to be afraid all the time.
Be afraid of refugees. Be afraid of muslims. Be afraid of black and brown people. Be afraid of police. Be afraid of mentally ill people. Be afraid of "those people," whomever "they" are, because we don't like what we don't understand in fact it scares us...

We think that we are protecting ourselves and our loved ones with our fear, but in fact, Yoda was right... **what we are really doing when we give in to fear is participating in causing suffering.**

This note was written between a 7 years old girl and her mother. It went viral last week after the mother posted it. The girl is autistic. She was hiding under the teacher's desk and would not come out and was too upset to talk so the mother came to school to respond to her child's need.

Does being autism make me bad?

The mother responded, What makes you wonder if being autism makes you bad?

Grownups always say it's hard being mom or dad if your kid is autism and it said on the TV if you're autism you hurt people. And kids who are autism have to be put in a jail to keep others safe, or tied up. (the girl wrote)

Do you think I believe these things are true or that I would say them? wrote the mother

NO!

What do you believe? the mother wrote

I don't like hurting people. I don't like being scared. I would be scared in a jail room. I was born autism but that doesn't mean I was born bad.

Are you crying? (the girl wrote)

Yes. I have happy tears that you know what is true; and I have sad tears because there are lots of people who don't know what is true. (the mother wrote)

It's true that sometimes autistic people hurt others when they are scared.
It's also true that a lot of the time neuro-typical people hurt others when we are scared.
Fear leads to suffering.

The Angels in the Christmas story tell us, "don't be afraid." Just like Jesus told the disciples after the resurrection, "don't be afraid."

God is calling us to let go of our fear or discomfort with what's different in others and maybe our fear and discomfort with what's different in ourselves
and notice what God is doing.

Because sometimes God is using difference for a purpose!

I went to an amazing workshop on church growth a few weeks ago and in the middle of listening to these high-energy, high-achieving Pastors of some of the largest and fastest growing churches, I realized... **these Pastors all have ADHD!** They said as much themselves!

Children with ADHD are labeled as, "difficult," and described as having a disability and I'm looking at all these highly successful Pastors with ADHD and I realized, **ADHD doesn't have to be a disability it can be an ability!** It's the ability that allows these pastors of megachurches to deal with the fast pace and all the things going on at the same time in their churches and still have energy to dream up new ideas.

And I thought... I have to find a way to tell the children in our congregation with ADHD this good news. Children with ADHD often struggle from depression because the whole world keeps telling them that something's wrong with them. **I have to tell these children they aren't dis-abled, they're super-abled for ministry!** We need to send these kids to seminary!

In the words of the postmodern theologian, Lady Gaga,
"God made you perfect,"
and
"God makes no mistakes."

When we let go of fear we create space for the changing of our hearts and lives to include people in love -- to see their value and their gifts, instead of excluding them out of fear.

When we let go of fear we can see how the low places where we're convinced we aren't enough or we don't have enough are really already abundantly filled.

When we let go of fear the obstacles that we thought were insurmountable mountains can become a level playing field.

When we let go of fear the crooked, twisted people whom everybody says are all wrong can turn out to be the exactly right person for the job!

And when we let go of fear, maybe even our own rough places are not defects... just maybe, they are the very character traits that make us the most useful for God.

When we let go of fear we become a part of creating space for the kingdom of God right here, right now in our lives, so that all of humanity can see God's salvation.

Prepare the way for the Lord: don't be afraid.
Make some space to see what wonderful things
God is already doing.
Through the most unlikely people
Don't be afraid of what God is doing. It's good news.