

Olive

Christmas Eve 2006

I'm not sure how often you watch Christmas specials on television, but I confess to being an addict. It's a wintertime ritual for me as I marvel at how the Grinch was changed. I long to hear the story of Christmas the way Linus tells it. And I delight in knowing that even though Rudolf feels insignificant at first, he will play a major part in saving Christmas.

Rudolf is probably one of my favorites simply because he didn't really fit in. Even he ended up on the island of Misfit Toys (Although I'm still trying to figure out why Charlie just didn't have his name changed to Jack!). But as I watched the story unfold, I see that Rudolf was able to be useful, in the grand scheme of Christmas, and still be who he was. You see, he didn't change. He still had that shiny nose, and he still talked funny. But because of who he was and how he was created, he was able to help Santa one foggy Christmas eve.

But what would have happened if he had listened to Olive? You remember Olive, the other reindeer who used to laugh and call him names? If Rudolph had given into peer pressure and changed, Christmas would have been lost that year. Isn't it absolutely heart warming that a group of insignificant outcasts of society get to be the hero's one Christmas day?

Did you know that a shepherd, in biblical times, was considered to be one of the lowest jobs around? All good Jews looked poorly at the disgusting life of a shepherd; they were so unclean. A shepherd was an insignificant outcast in that society. So just picture it: one night young Samuel, who is growing up so fast, is setting on the hillside with his father. As they talk, Samuel says to his father, "I don't think I want to be a shepherd". Outraged, the father exclaims, "What's wrong with being a shepherd? I'm a shepherd, your grandfather is a shepherd and your great

grandfather was a shepherd! We come from a long line of shepherds!”

I’m not sure what must have gone through Samuel’s mind. Maybe he had aspirations of being a dentist? Who knows? But for whatever the reason, Samuel felt that if he continued in the family tradition, he would be of no service to the rest of society. I’m sure Samuel had no idea what was about to unfold that night.

Have you ever felt like a misfit within the Church? Ever feel insignificant when it comes to the work of Jesus? Have you ever wondered what you could possibly contribute that would benefit those worshipping around you? A lot of people feel that way. Most of us spend our entire life living on the fringe, feeling like a misfit, because we compare ourselves to those around us. We watch the things they do or the way they serve and feel insignificant in comparison, which keeps us from serving the Lord.

The Bible doesn’t mention a Boy named Samuel who was watching over the flock the night Jesus was born, but he could have been there. And he possible may have felt insignificant and unimportant in the Kingdom of God. But when God called, the shepherds were able to play a major role in announcing the birth of Jesus. When Santa called Rudolph, he too was able to play a major role that foggy Christmas eve.

As you scratch your head and wonder how an oddball like yourself could ever be useful to God, when you feel like a misfit, please remember that in the eyes of God there are no misfits; there are no outcast. God used an ordinary girl and some common shepherds on that first Christmas. I wonder who He will use this Christmas? Maybe it will be you?

Pastor Greg