

Good, Better, Best!

We may have covered this subject before but what was your favorite subject in school? (Pardon the pun, please.) What was it that you loved about it? Unless you were a culinary arts student, lunch was not a subject! Please take about fifteen seconds and think about it. Now, if you are comfortable, share that with someone nearby.

One of my favorite subjects in school was English and I loved grammar. I loved the rules that went with it and how you could make a change to write the perfect sentence. I did NOT like to diagram sentences. The lines confused me and they still do. However, one of the things I liked was the early stages of forming positives, comparatives, and superlatives. Some of you already have a headache, but others are smiling with me. Do you remember, “good, better, best?” You may have learned the rhyme to go with it: “Good, better, best, never let it rest until the good is better and the better is best!”

How many of you have watched the Olympics in the past week? Talk about good, better, and best! Mark and I have been hooked on gymnastics and swimming. Just to get to the Olympics you have to be

“good” but there are athletes who are better, and finally there is the best! Whether you like her or not, you have to marvel at Simone Biles at 27 years old as she flies through the air. She is simply the best!! Well, at least in this Olympics she is.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells them, “Hey, people of Ephesus, you’re good! But, here is where you can do better. Never stop striving to be the best!” We know that Paul constantly exhorted the early Christian Church to emulate the best and head, Jesus Christ. Now, of course, this grossly paraphrases what Paul has written. It *can* be important for us today. Are we good? Can we do better? How can we be the best?

The same thing can be said for us today. All who have gathered here today are good. However, we come here, I think because we know that we can be better. Since we “practice” Christianity, we know that we can always improve. We’ve made some marvelous strides over the last two and half years, at least from what I can tell. We are better at sharing what we have to help others, we are better at opening our doors to invite others in, we are better at “extravagant hospitality” each Sunday and

with every event that happens in our church building. I know for a fact that we continue to add new members because the word is out about First Church/Southwick Congregational Church. We've even opened our homes to people in need on more than one occasion. Go church!!!!

We continue to strive to be better because we have yet to reach the superlative of "best." How many of us, myself included, still think that maybe we are being duped by someone for a handout? Have you seen people in line for a free meal or they drive up in a car and you wonder what they are doing here? We have to do better. Jesus tells us to give without qualification.

We can also do better in setting aside time for personal prayer and simply sitting and listening. Oftentimes, even in our pastoral prayer, we call upon God to help us or others. When do we sit quietly to hear the answer? Maybe we are called to "do better" in those times and we don't even know it because we didn't take the time to listen.

It may take us a lifetime to achieve the superlative "the best." We have our role model in Jesus to imitate so that we can one day achieve that lofty status. We are strengthened in this by paying attention to the

word of God, following the teachings of Jesus, turning to God when we have sinned, and asking for forgiveness. Hopefully, we will gather strength and spiritual nourishment whenever we participate in the Sacrament of Communion. Aren't we usually at least "at our best" when we share a meal with our family and friends?

Let us take comfort in knowing that we are good. May our goodness help us as we continue to work to be better and strive to be the best. Amen!