

Pushing Beyond
Wednesday, June 24, 2009

I am not sure if you have heard of Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg. She is a violinist. She can play the violin as easily as most people can breathe or sleep. She made her official concert debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the age of ten. She says, "When I was young, I was very talented. I still am, but I rode on that talent for such a long time."

"At age fourteen, I'd walk on stage and whip off the Carmen Fantasy as if I were Heifetz, because I had the ability in my fingers. At sixteen, I was still kind of whipping it off. At seventeen or eighteen, I walked on stage and stumbled all over it. I finally realized how difficult it was to play the violin." So, incredibly, Nadja abandoned her instrument while already a student at Julliard School of Music.

Her teacher at Julliard, Dorothy DeLay, had previously taught some of the world's best violinists. She grew angry with Nadja's "going through the motions" and her mediocre effort. When Nadja began showing up for lessons without her violin, Dorothy told her to shape up or ship out. "She was threatening to throw me out of class," says Nadja. "I was petrified."

Jolted out of her complacency, Nadja followed her teacher's demand: intense, dedicated practice. She entered the prestigious Naumburg Competition. "I was like a horse with blinders on. My goal was to make the finals so that everybody would know I was still out there," she says.

Everybody watched in awe as, at age twenty, she played her way to becoming the youngest first prize winner in the competition's history. She's gone on to perform for astonished audiences at sold-out concerts around the world.

Why do I tell you about Nadja? Nadja had become complacent with her life and with her talent. And that complacency almost cost her a great deal. Do you ever find yourself getting complacent?

In the scriptures, God is continually challenging the people of faith to rise from their complacency. God is challenging, inviting, and pushing us to live deeply into our faith. In Hosea 6:6 we hear God say, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of me rather than burnt offerings." God wants to be in a relationship with us.

What are you willing to do today, that moves you closer to God? If complacency has become a part of your life, what do you need to change to push you beyond it and closer to God?

May God help us live lives of faith.

In the hope Jesus offers us,
Rev. Scott Carlson

The Mission of Sun Prairie United Methodist Church is to invite and welcome people to be committed and compassionate followers of Jesus Christ through worship, through spiritual growth, through fellowship and through service to others.