

This week's been rather hard for me. It's very difficult opportunity, because everywhere I look, something bad is happening. I don't know if you know, Friday night, at a high school graduation in California, there was a mass shooting. Yesterday in Toledo at a music concert, there was another mass shooting. We keep seeing these over and over everywhere.

I had a discussion with a friend on Friday, and I love this person to death. She's a very close friend, but she's having a lot of problems right now. And the problems just keep compounding. What started off as just a little problem became a bigger one, and then a bigger one, and then a bigger one. And we're in the middle of this discussion and finally I say to them like, you need help. You need to admit that you did something wrong, and you need to start getting help for it. And her response to me was I've done nothing wrong. This is your problem because you see evil everywhere you go. And they've really got me to start thinking.

Because don't we sometimes do that? We get into a rut. We start seeing the bad in something, and then we see it in something else, and we see it again somewhere else, because it's all around us. Or at least, that's what we think. We can't help but sometimes just see the bad. And we forget all about the good and the good is what's the important part. If we only focus on the bad, we're only going to see the bad. It's real, easy to be like that.

I had a manager a long, long time ago because I'm old. And he would walk into a store. He was a supervisor overhead, and he would walk into all the restaurants and every time he would only look for the bad things that was his management style. He said there's no reason to look for the good things because the good things were already good. And we got into this huge fight one day because I told him If you're only looking for the bad all you're ever going to see is bad. And I forgot that.

I forgot that. I've realized, actually, I didn't realize I've been living this week like this Wednesday realized for me. It's Friday; we went out. We had our father, daughter, special Friday, summer luncheon. You know, it's a fancy restaurant she likes to go to. And we're sitting there, and she tells me Dad, I think you should be Governor. Now I guess it's very random because I have no aspiration to become Governor. Not at all. And I said, why do you think I should become the governor? And she says, because you try to help so many people, you can't help all the people you think you need to help by just being in Madrid.

And what does that mean? You know, those little six-year-olds telling me that I'm trying to help too many people or I'm not doing it the right way, or does everything I see being bad rubbing off on her now, and she doesn't like it. Well, I am grateful that she thinks I could do that someday.

It made me think about Bible study that morning. We had a lot of good discussions in Bible study on Friday morning. And I love the story of Amos, the book that today's reading is from. If you don't know about Amos, Amos is one of the minor prophets in the Jewish Faith.

He is one of, if not, the biggest minor prophet, if that makes sense. It's a little oxymoron there.

Here's one of the most significant minor prophets because he's not really a prophet. He is just a shepherd, and we know from so many of our readings that shepherds are generally younger. They're uneducated. They're just people with very poor social graces for lack of a better term. That's why they're out with the sheep because they don't like people. You don't get along with people. And Amos is fantastic because it is the only time that a Shepherd is referred to at the same level as God. The words that they use for shepherd in Amos is the same one they use for God as the shepherd in First Kings. So it makes him above the regular shepherds.

And what I like most about Amos is really, he's just this angry old guy that doesn't like people and is tired of everything being bad. He's tired of seeing the bad in everything that he looks at, and he decides I'm gonna go tell people, so he does. He has no training. He never went to Hebrew school. He never studied the Scrolls. He was just a guy going out and saying, hey, you're not feeding the hungry. You're not taking care of the poor. You're not doing anything that God has told us to do. Instead, you're building yourself big rich houses. You're stealing vineyards from the poor, making them work it. And then you get all the good wine you're shutting off their water. You're not giving them clothes, you're charging them three times what the value is for shoes.

And he goes, and he travels around. He says this to everybody, and then it gets pretty far along. And finally, one day he's like, you know, what? I'm tired. I'm tired of seeing evil everywhere I go. I need to start seeing love. I need to start talking about what it really means to be one of God's followers, because God knows all the bad that's going on in the world. He doesn't need me to tell him, That's what today's reading is about.

God already knows everything that I know. God already sees everything that I see. So, I need a six-year-old to remind me that there's a lot more positives in the world, especially right now.

We've got rain, so that means the flowers are going to start blooming. Tomorrow it's going to be muggy. It's going to be icky, but that means the bugs are going to get to come out. And they're going to get the pollinate all of those flowers, and we're going to have grapefruits and vegetables because of it.

The kids are out of school so that messes with our schedules, but we get to hear their giggles all the time. We get to play and remember what it used to be like to be that age when nothing besides, what cartoon we're going to watch, what junk food we're going to get to eat, and how we're going to go and con Grandpa and Grandma, and get ice cream at some point in the day. Those are the good things that we need to focus on.

When we focus on what we're doing, it becomes a job, right? And jobs are work. And jobs are things we don't like. But if we love what we do, if we truly love seeing the good in everything, then it makes it easier to get up each morning, right? It makes it easier to go to our meetings and sit and talk with people. It makes it easier to go and do things that generally we just wouldn't want to do. Since Wednesday and I had that talk, I started looking for the positives. I started looking for the love.

I spent yesterday afternoon at Sky Zone. If you've not been there, it is quite an energetic place. It's a trampoline park. You can't wear shoes and you are bombarded literally with small children and dodgeballs, no matter where you are. And it's loud and annoying. Well, it was wonderful, because instead of sitting there thinking about all of those things, I was thinking about the giggles. I was thinking about the fun, the people older than I, were having bouncing around on a trampoline. It is something to see an 80 year old get out in the middle of one of those trampolines and try and slam a basketball. And then hear them laugh as they fell on their face and missed. Those are the things that we miss when we focus too much on the negative.

It's so easy to get caught up in that, and then that just eats at you. It just keeps eating at you. So, please, if you find yourself stuck and thinking about the bad, thinking about how hard it is? Remember, just remember, one little thing. It doesn't matter what it is, but it's something that means something to you. That moment when all the bad shifted away. That quiet and peacefulness, God's love touching you. Remember that? And try to help somebody else remember that too? Let us pray.