**A Slice of Interesting from Papa’s Perspective**

Rumor has it that Pastor Donald has some new paraphernalia to show off. But it’s not a fancy preacher’s robe or a new stole, and he’s not referring to the suit he’ll be adorning when he gets married to Katherine next month. Rather, it’s a nifty polo and cool hat trademarked with a brand some know and refer to as “PJ.” Now, we’re not talking pajama bottoms or peanut butter and jelly without the butter. We’re talking pizza, and not just any pizza; Papa John’s pizza.

 Having finished seminary in May and having had the privilege of entering into a third year of ministry with the First UMC of Mt. Holly, this time solo and as a part-time licensed local pastor, I knew I would be getting another part-time job at some point. During our Summer in the Psalms Challenge, which just ended, I felt as though I was working part-time as an author on the side. especially as I crafted (and continue to work on) what I hope to be a published devotional in the future.

 But now, I thought it wise to turn from my fun as a wanna-be, unpaid author to something else which would offer some additional income. Several potentials came to my mind. I worked as a sales representative for Cutco Cutlery throughout college and could easily pick that back up in some capacity. I could also reach out to Perinchief Funeral Home to make myself available as a pastor who could lead funerals when deaths occurred in the community. After all, something like that would be much more in line with my ministerial work. But God has an interesting way of throwing us for a loop and calling us into something we would have never expected.

It all began one Friday as I was driving out of Mt. Holly. A mere two streets away from home, I passed by a car with a Domino’s pizza sign on top of it, with a person just coming back from a delivery. Five seconds later, a second car with a Domino’s pizza sign passes me by on the other side of the same road. I turn onto the next road and within a minute, I kid you not, a third pizza delivery person, who I’m convinced was not one of the first two, pulls up behind me and follows me for a bit as I head to my destination. The next day I see, not a Domino’s, but a Papa John’s sign advertising for work: “Hiring Drivers” it said...I didn’t give it too much thought though.

But the day after, on Sunday, when I’m at First Baptist Church for the first time for their monthly prayer meeting on human trafficking, another slice of interesting happens. Three-fourths of the way through this prayer meeting, I become completely distracted and consumed by one thought, which I would later attest to the Spirit’s prompting: I need to apply for a job to be a pizza delivery person. In my mind, when this was bubbling up, I was imagining that somehow, in some way, a human trafficking ring or situation would become exposed if I became a pizza delivery person. I imagined that one day I would deliver pizza to a home I saw something suspicious in when the front door was opened, and call the NJ human trafficking hotline, exposing a scheme right there in Mt. Holly. Idealistic? Unrealistic? I don’t know if that would ever happen, but considering we just had special guest speakers come to our church to speak on the issue of human trafficking that Sunday, it was nonetheless on my mind, especially as I was in the context of the prayer meeting.

We finished our prayer meeting and before everyone left, while casual conversation was ensuing, I asked if I could express something I wanted them to pray about. “This is going to sound really strange…I mean, really strange,” I said. “And this is something I would never even think of doing unless God put it on my heart to do. But…I…I think the Lord is calling me to apply for a job as a pizza delivery person…”

For reasons I wasn’t completely cognizant of, I headed straight from the prayer meeting to Papa John’s, perhaps somewhat like a cow walking into a trailer to be transported to where the cow knows not. That night I filled out an application to be a pizza delivery person. The very next evening I would have an interview, and in that interview I took a risk and was blatantly honest with the manager for my primary reason for applying. “This is going to sound really strange, but the primary reason I applied to this job was because I felt the Lord leading me to do so and I wanted to be obedient to what God was leading me to do.” To my surprise, it was received without me getting too strange a look. Although, I’m sure it caught him off guard; you know, if putting “pastor” down as my former and current occupation on my application wasn’t strange enough.

We are told in the famous Philippians 2:5-11 passage of how Jesus did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped, but was obedient and humbled himself, even to the point of death on a cross. Now, working at Papa John’s is at a much much lower scale of humility and obedience compared to the example of Christ. But, as one with a seminary degree and as one who is continuing to grow into the vocation God has called me into as a minister, working at Papa John’s, a place filled with mostly younger guys in high school and college, was, nonetheless, a humbling step, and was the last thing I would have expected. And yet, here I am starting work at PJ’s the day after Labor Day. I know not what God wants to do through this, but I know God has called me to it, and so I desire to be obedient to the Spirit’s prompting.

Are there things in your life that seem absurd and ridiculous, but that God may be calling you to do? In what ways may God be calling you to humble yourself for the sake of impact for God’s Kingdom? Perhaps it’s not putting on new PJ paraphernalia, but perhaps it’s putting on a new perspective, or a new discipline, or a greater investment into an old or new relationship, or time. Whatever it is, if you feel the Spirit’s prompting inside, I encourage you to follow that fifth sense, which probably isn’t merely your gut. It’s probably the LORD, even if you may be very surprised at what God is telling you when you listen closely.

So, I’m not merely a pastor now, I’m a product relocation specialist (i.e. a pizza delivery guy). My idealistic imagining of a human trafficking circle being exposed and eliminated from my work as a pizza delivery person may never happen. There may be nothing overly spectacular that happens after each night I’m scheduled to deliver hot and fresh Papa John pizzas to people. Perhaps God wants to strategically place me in Mt. Holly’s Papa John’s to be a witness to co-workers there. Or perhaps this is going to open up a door for ministry, the church, or my personal life in an unexpected way that blows my mind, in a way I can’t even foresee. Or maybe I’ll get to the end of however long God has me there and still feel confused as to why God called me to Papa John’s in the first place. I have no idea. But what I do know is that God has called me here for a season and I want to be obedient to that calling.

May the month of September be one that is defined by humble obedience for you, even if your obedience means stepping into the unknown. However embarrassed or hesitant we may feel to do something, whether it’s for fear of what others will think or for other reasons, the best path to always take is the path of obedience. For I guarantee you that if you follow the path of obedience, you’ll find yourself on quite the wild ride with all sorts of interesting slices along the way. No matter what God calls you to, I pray that you might be willing to be obedient. For it is in obedience that we find the greatest joy, fulfillment, and freedom.

P.S. Now, don’t go ordering Papa John’s and get it delivered to you just because you have a pastor that works there. But if I happen to be working on a night that you just can’t seem to stay away, perhaps you’ll want to request for the Papa John Preacher to pay you a pizza visit.