Simplicity, Purity of Heart, and the Gift of Limits

Keith Dow

Abstract

This essay employs Kierkegaard's articulation of simplicity as "the purity of heart to will one thing" to argue that the virtue of simplicity arises within human limitation. People of diverse abilities, including those with disabilities, together can learn to simply act on their shared values, and to practice a purity of life where conviction and action are aligned. The author considers the danger of a too-easy association of simplicity and intellectual disability, explores the Anabaptist emphasis on simplicity in theological inquiry, discusses "cleverness" and the good, and stresses personal and corporate integrity, accessibility, and single-minded devotion to Christ.

The Virtue of Simplicity

In the fall of 2019, I was invited to present a workshop at a conference reimagining the relationship between Canadian churches and their neighborhoods. The topic was "fostering belonging in community." I had invited Betty, a middle-aged woman with an intellectual disability, to help me facilitate and to share her experience.[1] As the hour-long workshop began, I loaded my over-ambitious 26 slides. I shared statistics on the social isolation experienced by people with intellectual disabilities and the general population. I noted that the Angus Reid Institute reports that over 60 percent of Canadians would like to spend more time with friends and family, and under 15 percent describe the current state of their social lives as "very good."[2] "Technology and transience contribute to loneliness and social isolation," I went on, adding that "there are many reasons why we feel lonely. It's hard to build community these days."

[1] Betty's name has been changed in the interest of confidentiality.

[2] "A Portrait of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Canada Today," Angus Reid Institute, June 17, 2019, http://angusreid.org/social-isolation-loneliness-canada/.

The Conrad Grebel Review 38, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 147-160.

At that point, Betty jumped in: "It's not that hard," she said, "It's actually pretty easy." Taken aback, and less than halfway through my carefully prepared slide deck, I nevertheless asked what she meant. "When I want to meet someone, I just go up and say 'Hi.' Like at the bus stop, or whatever. If they don't want to talk to me, I go on and talk someone else instead." In several sentences, she had put into words the kinds of actions needed to build community: she simply lived out her desire to meet people and make friends. Betty felt no embarrassment or awkwardness about approaching strangers. Strangers may carry on with their reading, scrolling their social newsfeed, or listening to music instead of responding to her. Others take the time to connect with her in a meaningful way.

Getting to know Betty, I realize that she lives out her beliefs and values simply, in a way that is difficult for me. She is well known and loved in her community. She volunteers regularly at her local thrift store, is active in her church choir, and is celebrated as an example of community involvement and participation. While I was busy talking and thinking about community development, she was simply living it out. Several questions come to mind: What helped Betty to engage so well with those around her? Why is it simple for her to build community, whereas it seems so complicated to me? What might I learn from her example?

Simplicity is a long-established pillar of Anabaptist life. The ways our sisters and brothers with intellectual disabilities simply work toward that which is good can inform the practice of simplicity in Christian community in diverse ways. In this essay, I draw on philosopher Søren Kierkegaard's articulation of simplicity as "the purity of heart to will one thing" to argue that the virtue of simplicity arises within human limitation. As people of diverse abilities, we must learn to simply act on the shared values we know to be true. We must practice, together, a purity of life where conviction and action are aligned, undeterred by clever evasions or intellectual excuses.

Below I will first consider the danger of a too-easy association of simplicity and intellectual disability. Then, after exploring the Anabaptist emphasis on simplicity in theological inquiry, I will look to "purity of heart to will one thing" to deconstruct the privilege of "cleverness." Christian communities are called to reclaim simplicity of life and practice. Finally,

through the lens of confession I will look at what this means for personal and corporate integrity, accessibility, and single-minded devotion to Christ.

Intellectual Disability and Simplicity

There is a danger in too quickly associating simplicity with intellectual disability. "Simple-minded" has been used as a derogatory term for people thought to lack intelligence.[3] It is but one of many insults used against those who have, or are perceived to have, limited cognitive ability.

Using words like "simple" in a derogatory manner reveals a societal bias toward intellectual ability, complexity, and complication. People thought to be clever or intelligent—according to certain standards of cognitive ability—are held in high esteem, while simplicity of thought is seldom considered as a gift. Since the 1200s, "simple" has carried a double meaning: to be "free from duplicity" and to be foolish.[4] Rather than merely condemn negative connotations of simplicity, I suggest that we must reclaim the vital virtue of sincerity while challenging too-easy associations of simplicity with foolishness.

Let me return to Betty here. She lives a more complex and varied life than I do. Having more financial resources at my disposal, my family and I live outside the city and drive a car rather than take public transportation. Much of my work is done on a computer rather than face-to-face with others, and I am not regularly a part of a day program or other structured activities. One reason that Betty engages with diverse people is due to her limited income. She cannot afford a car, so she sees people often as she navigates public transportation. Limited by not having full-time paid employment, she volunteers and gets "out and about" regularly. She is seldom alone and visits often with friends.

In other ways, Betty's limitations simplify her life. Where her daily commute and activities are complicated by her limited income, these limits mean that she encounters many people through the course of a day. It is simple for her to build the community that she seeks. Admittedly, others

[3] "simple-minded": *Cambridge Dictionary Online*. 2020. https://dictionary.cambridge.org, accessed May 2, 2020.

[4] "simple": Douglas Harper, Online Etymology Dictionary, http://www.etymonline.com/, accessed September 6, 2017.

might have difficulty making friends in similar circumstances. Many of the people Betty meets are strangers. Social inhibitions generally prevent us from introducing ourselves to people we do not know. Betty's social inhibitions are also limited but in a different way. Many people with intellectual disabilities or autism do not share my fears of honest expression or awkward encounters. This may be due to a difficulty or limited ability in interpreting social cues. Betty's limited social inhibition means that she just introduces herself to people she wants to get to know. She lacks or ignores any evasions or excuses that would keep her from making friends. In the workshop on fostering belonging in community, I was quick to identify the challenges and difficulties that one might face in community development work, but Betty simply makes community happen.

Simplicity and Anabaptist Theology

Early Anabaptist writing consisted largely of testimonies beginning with "This I do confess" or "This we do believe."[5] These confessions were not first and foremost intended as theological discourses but as expressions of the heart. Robert Friedmann writes that they were "usually very simple, abounding in Bible quotations and short declarations. Theology was not intended and will hardly be found in them."[6] What Friedmann means is not that these testimonies lacked theological coherence, but that their power did not arise from their intellectual mastery of a doctrinal belief. It was the way the confessions were lived out that demonstrated their authenticity and truth—often to the point of persecution and martyrdom. In light of the Anabaptist dedication to costly discipleship, Friedmann interprets Anabaptism as "an outstanding example of existential Christianity, where "existential" means

> above all an extreme concreteness of the Christian experience. Such an experience is neither of an intellectual nature (doctrinal understanding) nor is it emotional. For lack of a better description we will call it 'total' . . . an unreserved surrender and dedication to the divine will.[7]

[5] Robert Friedmann, "Recent Interpretations of Anabaptism," *Church History* 24, no. 2 (1955): 135, www.jstor.org/stable/3161651, accessed May 11, 2020.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 144.

In their commitment to unreserved surrender to God's will, Anabaptists seek to avoid hypocrisy or divided loyalty. This hypocrisy is what Christ protests when he calls the Pharisees "white-washed tombs," with a façade of purity but often pronouncing religious judgment on others rather than aligning their own faith and action (Matt. 23:27-28).The apostle Paul feared that Christians would be led astray from authentic faith: "But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3 NASB). He objects to cunning or cleverness that might lead to hypocrisy, a divided devotion that distracts from simple obedience. The disciple of Christ is to love and serve God with an unadulterated commitment.

Dedicated to living out their confessions of faith authentically, Anabaptists and Mennonites have long emphasized the virtue of simplicity. This virtue closely relates to "sincerity, humility, and forthrightness," and its impact is seen in various aspects of community, "including address and communication, forms of worship and type of meetinghouse, character of homes and furniture, costume etc."[8] In this way, simplicity in community life might mean adopting limits on the styles of clothing, on types of worship, or even on the kinds of structures that are built and how elaborate they are. Similarly, new technologies and sources of information and influence from outside the community might be limited if they are understood as detracting from shared values. Questions are raised, such as "Is this device appropriate for our values?" or "What might be the consequences of [this device or technology]?"[9] In contrast to merely accepting new technology or unlimited access to the latest news and information as a community good, it is understood that a kind of "double-mindedness" can arise when community members are caught up in the latest novelty.[10]

While simplicity in the Anabaptist community is typically a result

[8] Harold S. Bender, Nanne van der Zijpp, and Cornelius Krahn, "Simplicity" (1958), *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Simplicity_(1958)&oldid=104551, accessed July 10, 2020.

[9] Rivka Neriya-Ben Shahar, "'Mobile Internet Is Worse than the Internet; It Can Destroy Our Community': Old Order Amish and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Women's Responses to Cellphone and Smartphone Use," *The Information Society* 36, no. 1 (2019): 1-18, https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2019.1685037, 5.

[10] Ibid., 10.

of limits chosen by the members, Betty faces limits on her income and intellectual ability that are not of her own choosing. Regardless of how they arose, her limits have similarly positioned her to live out the virtue of simplicity in her commitment to building community by making friends.

Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing

Raised in the state Lutheran church in Denmark in the 19th century, Søren Kierkegaard may seem an unlikely ally in a conversation on simplicity, intellectual disability, and Anabaptist thought. He wrote a number of pseudonymous books—forms of "indirect communication"—that appear anything but simple. Even when writing under an assumed name, though, Kierkegaard sought to compel his reader to practice her Christian faith with earnestness and sincerity. He is known for his sharp critique of Christendom and its inauthentic instantiation in the state-run church. This critique resonates with the Anabaptist tradition. As Harold Schaff writes, Anabaptists were "emphatically opposed to any interference in matters of belief by the government, and were therefore early and outspoken protagonists of the principle of separation of Church and State."[11] They called out the disparity they observed between "the institutions of Christian lands and what they regarded as the plain teachings of Scripture . . . the uncorrupted simplicity of the Gospel."[12]

Kierkegaard's call to authentic Christian practice is evident in his non-pseudonymous *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing*. There he considers James's instruction "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8, ESV). How does one "draw near to God?" The believer must will one thing: the good. It must be willed in truth; that is, it must be lived out in one's life and action.[13] Seeking the good in truth, which for Kierkegaard is synonymous with seeking God and all that comes from God, is both the highest possible pursuit and accessible to all. It is also the basis

[11] Harold H. Schaff, "The Anabaptists, the Reformers, and the Civil Government," *Church History* 1, no. 1 (1932): 30, www.jstor.org/stable/3160982. accessed May 11, 2020.
[12] Ibid., 29.
[13] Søren Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, ed. Howard Vincent Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), 24. Hereafter *Upbuilding Discourses.*

for finding peace and harmony with others: "To will one thing, to will the good in truth, to will as a single individual to be allied with God—something unconditionally everyone can do—that is harmony."[14] Seeking God is the great equalizer. It is a "blessed equality, that in the strictest sense the sufferer can unconditionally do the highest fully as well as the most gifted person in the most fortunate sense."[15] Those who are looked down upon can "throw off the character of wretchedness" because both the "great" and the "small" can equally achieve the highest pursuit of the good; the simplicity of a pure devotion to God.[16]

Cleverness and the Good

Kierkegaard is adamant that cleverness is not always an advantage in pursuing the good:[17] "The [clever one] needs to take a lot of time and trouble to understand what the simple person at the joyous prompting of a pious heart feels no need to understand in lengthy detail, because he at once simply understands only the good."[18] Interpreting this passage only in relation to intellectual disability might reinforce an ableist attitude that excuses people with intellectual disabilities from meaningful moral action. They are sometimes regarded as innocent angels, unable to do wrong. Rather, we are all human beings capable of expressing the whole range of virtue and depravity. Thankfully, Kierkegaard has something different in mind here. It is not that simplicity as such is virtuous, but that intellectual ability and reflection can distract from simple truth and obedience. He bookends his discourse with a prayer: "Father in Heaven! What is a human being without you! What is everything he knows, even though it were enormously vast and varied, but a disjointed snippet if he does not know you. . . ."[19] It is the

[14] Ibid., 144.
[15] Ibid., 111.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Howard and Edna Hong use "sagacity" in their translation, which seems pretentious and unclear. Through this paper I have drawn on the more recent Hong translation but retain Douglas Steere's translation of "cleverness" for the sake of plain speech. Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing; Spiritual Preparation for the Office of Confession*, trans. Douglas V. Steere (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1976). Hereafter *Purity of Heart.*
[18] Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses,* 25.
[19] Ibid., 7, 153.

intimate relational knowledge of God's goodness in the living of one's life that prevents intellectual knowledge from being "a disjointed snippet."[20]

Kierkegaard encourages his readers to use their intellect against any distraction or evasion from willing the good.[21] These evasions are often manufactured by "cleverness" in the first place. Our minds calculate excuses that prevent us from committing to the good. "Cleverness strives continually against the commitment."[22] One must use intelligence "against himself as a spy and informant who promptly reports every evasion."[23] Rather than simply acting upon the good that is known, the clever person might appeal to practical concerns as an evasion from committing to the good: perhaps the timing for pursuing the good isn't ideal; maybe there are other ways to accomplish the same thing. Perhaps the *appearance* of goodness is actually more desirable than doing the good itself. "The good is not distinguished," and "The [clever one] knows just how the good must be changed a little in order to win favor in the eyes of the world; he knows how much should be added and how much should be subtracted."[24] When the good does not align with personal success, the clever person might choose to pursue a version of goodness that *does* appear as accomplishment in the eyes of others.[25] However, this is not purity of heart. To seek the good only when it comes with recognition in the eyes of the world is to be double-minded. Evasions and modifications are what Anabaptists protested as "evangelical half-measures and hesitancy," and "they were willing to testify to their beliefs with their lives if need be."[26] Suffering and martyrdom was inevitable for many who belonged to these counter-cultural communities of simplicity, those who sought "obedience to divine will without any reservation."[27]

Kierkegaard observes that the crucifixion of Christ was the ultimate revelation of the discrepancy between worldly reward and the pure, simple

[20] Ibid., 149.
[21] Ibid., 94.
[22] Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart,* 127.
[23] Ibid., 93.
[24] Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart,* 129 (or "aristocratic," *Upbuilding Discourses,* 84); *Upbuilding Discourses,* 87; *Purity of Heart,* 132.
[25] Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses,* 89.
[26] Schaff, "The Anabaptists, the Reformers, and the Civil Government," 30.
[27] Friedmann, "Recent Interpretations of Anabaptism," 137.

pursuit of the good. Immediate reward does not confirm that one has pursued the good in truth, just as pursuing the good in truth does not necessarily bring with it temporal success.[28] Christ "accomplished but little" if one looks at the temporal rewards of his life, including his suffering death on the cross. He was "rejected by temporality," and "no one has ever, in the sense of the moment, accomplished as little by a life solely committed to sacrifice as did Jesus Christ."[29] No wonder that onlookers said of him, "the fool, he wanted to help others and he cannot help himself."[30] Kierkegaard muses that they likely thought, "If he had only half my cleverness, he would be king."[31]

Another 19th-century philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, made similar observations about Christ's life, reaching very different conclusions. Emphasizing "the will to power," Nietzsche disdains any admiration for Jesus that might consider him a "genius." Rather, "Spoken with the precision of a physiologist, even an entirely different word would be yet more fitting here—the word idiot."[32] In the pursuit of temporal power and immediate success, Christ's life choices appear anything but intelligent. The apostle Paul confirms that Christ had a different agenda in mind, and this is how God works in the world through both Jesus and his followers: "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor. 1:27, ESV).

In the *Antichrist,* Nietzsche attacks what he sees as the Achilles heel of Christianity: its unquestioning embrace of suffering and loss in its pursuit of what Christians understand to be "the good." Nowhere is this "slave morality" more fully reflected than in the Sermon on the Mount, the ultimate root of *ressentiment*: "'Resist not evil'—the most profound word of the Gospels, their key in a certain sense."[33] Perhaps the only others to take Christ's radical counter-cultural instruction so seriously are the early Christians and the Anabaptists, the latter for whom "one of the strongest tenets of their belief is

[28] Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses,* 89.
[29] Ibid., 91.
[30] Ibid., Kierkegaard reflecting on Matt. 27:42.
[31] Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart,* 138.
[32] Friedrich W. Nietzsche, "The Antichrist," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Penguin, 1976), 565-656, 601.
[33] Nietzsche, "The Antichrist," 600.

'Thou shalt not kill.'"[34] The pacifist position, which seeks to work for peace without resorting to violence and is a hallmark of Anabaptist thought and practice, Nietzsche would regard as "idiotic." Where he read foolishness and spiritual death, the Anabaptists discovered life and freedom in service to God. Sebastian Franck, a 16th-century spiritual reformer, wrote that Anabaptists "taught nothing but love, faith, and the cross."[35] Although for them "mere knowledge and learning . . . are not enough," it was their example that bore out the value of their adherence to their beliefs, no matter how foolish or radical their way of life appeared to those around them. In a complicated world where violence was a tool of power, these simple commitments were costly. Franck witnesses that "they died as martyrs, patiently and humbling enduring all persecution."[36]

Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and the Anabaptist tradition confront Christ's radical call to submit personal concerns and questions of immediate practicality to a higher good. Where Nietzsche rejects such "idiocy," Anabaptists embrace what Kierkegaard calls "the noble simplicity that is in inner harmony with every human being."[37] Anabaptists work for peace while submitting to nonviolent means of attaining it. In this "willful forgetting" of the possibility of using violence for power, a world of creative potential is opened toward peacemaking.

This argument may seem to have strayed far from Betty and her direct, unashamed way of making friends. Regardless of her beliefs about war and violence, in her life and actions she works tirelessly to cultivate harmony and a spirit of friendship in her relationships. Because of her limited income, she comes face-to-face with countless people in the course of her day. She has a single-minded commitment to making the most of those encounters. *Not* saying "Hi" to people she wants to get to know does not seem to be an option. She is undeterred by potentially negative or hostile reactions to her way of initiating friendship. She does not give much thought to all the ways these encounters can go wrong. Her friendliness is composed of countless small, direct acts of peacemaking with an unfazed commitment to her values.

[34] Schaff, "The Anabaptists, the Reformers, and the Civil Government," 46.
[35] Friedmann, "Recent Interpretations of Anabaptism," 146.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses,* 70.

Would that all believers could "forget" or "unknow" the inhibitions and evasions that keep us from willing the good, simply, in the actions and interactions of everyday life. Even practical concerns can be a type of knowledge of which "one should rather wish to learn the art of forgetting."[38] Consider how many times we refuse to enact the good that we know we should do because it might make us late for another engagement or cost us more than we anticipate in terms of money, time, or energy. The art of forgetting on a larger scale might mean refusing to believe that humans can be taken advantage of for profit, or that violence can be used as a means to a "good" end. I submit that these are types of knowledge that "we should rather wish and pray that there was an art that could teach one to want to be ignorant of . . . ."[39]

An Occasion for Personal Confession

Kierkegaard's *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing* is *on* and *for* the occasion of confession, for each reader. Readers must ask: "What is my relation to the good? Do I practice simple-minded pursuit of God, or does my cleverness distract me from pursuing the good in truth?" Meeting Betty and hearing her story made me aware of my own double-mindedness and how I evade building community. My excess slides and well-formed arguments on the difficulty of nurturing friendship betray me. I think of my intellect as an advantage in pursuing the good, an advantage that Betty perhaps does not possess to the same extent.[40] Instead, my cleverness too often manufactures excuses that prevent me from doing the good I know I ought to do. Betty has much to teach me about devotion to my friends, my community, and my faith. To confess, to draw near to God, is the highest step that one might take, and it is one that anyone can take.[41] As the words of James challenge me to draw near to God, to purify my own heart, I must ask, "What kind of life is yours; do you will one thing in truth?"[42] To will the good in truth means that it must not only be believed *as* truth but lived in actuality before God.

[38] Ibid., 38.
[39] Ibid., 39.
[40] Ibid., 145.
[41] Ibid., 104.
[42] Ibid., 126.

The presence of God changes everything, Kierkegaard writes, and "As soon as God is present, everyone has the task before God of paying attention to [oneself]."[43] Awareness of God's presence is occasion for private confession. Although Kierkegaard does not mention it, God's presence also prompts us to also pay attention to one another. Early Anabaptists paid close attention to God's revelation as a spiritual experience and not only as written words. They were committed to the "living word . . . that pierces the soul."[44] However, the Kingdom life "cannot exist for the 'single one' in his isolation but only for those who have united in the *Koinonia*."[45] Attention must not only be given to one's own spiritual life but to mutual growth in committed community. This is a truth that Kierkegaard demonstrated in his upbuilding discourses yet never fully developed in a way that might be adopted by an Anabaptist community. Quiet attentiveness to the lives, experiences, and simple witness of others leads to diverse insights and revelations. There are many things we can apprehend only if we pay attention to the ways God works in the lives of people different from us. This is why community is so crucial to the Christian life. It is underplayed by Kierkegaard but essential to Anabaptist life and practice. It is through learning from one another that we discover many areas in which we act hypocritically, where we embody double-mindedness.

A Call for Corporate Confession

Just as we have occasion to confess individually, so we have occasion for corporate confession. Christ commands the honesty of plain language when he instructs that in oaths "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil" (Matt. 5:37, ESV). Countless church signs and websites promise that "All are welcome." What if we devoted ourselves to willing this aspect of the good? What if churches made every effort to simply live out the promises we make to our communities, even those we post on our websites or signage? What if we had Betty's single-minded focus on living out what we profess to believe? Too often, not everyone is welcome in our gatherings. While we might say that "drawing near to God"

[43] Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses,* 125.
[44] Friedmann, "Recent Interpretations of Anabaptism," 138.
[45] Ibid., 145.

in corporate worship is accessible to all, too often people are prevented from full participation by the steps out front, the over-intellectual sermon, lack of translation, or being asked to leave because they are being "disruptive." Even when participation in services is open to all, stages may have a single step that prevent people who use wheelchairs from ministering from the pulpit. This step represents the complexity and double-mindedness of many congregational practices. Would we truly welcome someone like Betty to share how God has been working in her life, and to learn from her simple dedication to the truth? I am thankful that Betty sings as part of her church choir. She has been welcomed into a place of not only *receiving* in the context of her faith, but also welcomed into a role where she is *ministering to others*.

There many other ways we can learn from those around us in all of our varied limitations. We can learn from the honesty of brothers and sisters who lack social inhibition. This may mean an exuberant, ill-timed "Amen." It may mean profanity when the service runs too long. Simple communication sometimes means greeting someone at an inopportune time, just because we care. Limiting our speech to honest conversation might call us to be frank with families who experience disabilities about their needs and how congregations can be a part of their lives. Like plain Anabaptist professions of faith that were backed by the full conviction and practice of a life well-lived, we must be willing to simply follow through on the promises our church makes to its disabled community members.

As we confess corporate sins of duplicity—times where we fled God's goodness rather than drawing close in simple faith—we must not lose heart. Indeed, much work remains personally, in academic spheres, in corporate worship, and in neighborhood and community life. Simplicity takes many forms. Yet, frantic busyness only distracts us further from the simple and sincere good to which we are called. Before constructing elaborate plans on what "success" will look like, we should welcome to the table Betty and families who experience disability. We need to practice quiet attentiveness as we hear from those too often been left out of the conversation, and let them take the lead. Kierkegaard describes purity as "constancy in one thing."[46] Before trying to do everything, let us seek the heart of God for the path ahead, for the "blessed equality" of a community where limits are appreciated

[46] Kierkegaard, *Upbuilding Discourses,* 121.

as gifts that help us welcome God's goodness. It seems like a simple place to start, because it is.

There is a beginning everywhere,
and the good beginning is everywhere where you begin with God.[47]
— Søren Kierkegaard

[47] Ibid., 139.