

Do you ever feel like you're a sort of "middling" sort? Complexion neither fair nor olive, hair neither short nor long, height neither tall nor short, social station neither downtrodden nor affluent, generally pleasant but not particularly memorable? Maybe I'm projecting here. But it seems to me that many of us wrestle in a stage of life when the giving up of "dreams of grandeur" that we held as younger adults necessitates dialing down the volume of life to accommodate the choices (read: sacrifices happily made) we've made along the way. Suddenly we realize that at one point we thought we'd be an international ambassador, and instead the only international contact we have now is in the Mexican food aisle at the grocery store. Is this just a Minnesota thing? It sounds so very Prairie Home Companion.

Sometimes I observe to my husband about the problem of having to work at keeping the lid on myself. Here's an example that happened last week. I was checking out at Goodwill (or was it Salvation Army? I can't ever remember which ones are which), where I had found a cool wall decoration that was an enormous key, and it only cost \$4. Sweet. I love a good deal. As the clerk scanned the key, I commented aloud, "You should see the size of my car." Cue the drum: bah dump-dump. But I got nothin' from the clerk (to be fair it should be mentioned here that she wasn't particularly chatty to begin with). Come on! That's a funny joke! At least worth a snort, right? ...Right? (*crickets chirping*) I can only imagine this problem will escalate as I continue to age and become an amplified version of the self I am right now. I fear for all of you!

I've come to notice more of this at church. I don't know why it affects me more there, or why it is more apparent to me there right now. At church I often have an internal urge to whoop or holler or at least give an "Amen" occasionally – not all the time and not as a knee-jerk reaction, but there are certain moments that need a hardy endorsement. But my church is not usually a call and response sort of place, which is usually fine and certainly doesn't diminish its effectiveness or passion. There are, however, those times when to stand with a poker face is pretty cold-hearted. I've been in front of a large group of people and gotten those zoned out looks, and let's just say it affected the ambiance of the experience for everyone, not only for myself as the one up front. If only a few people responded, it would have given others the permission to respond. It doesn't seem like that big a deal, but everyone would have benefitted had those few people chimed in, as it were, and cracked the seal on the bottled-up room. And when it comes to stopping the Spirit, I believe there is a verse in the Gospels where Jesus won't tell his disciples to settle down, and says "...If they keep quiet, the rocks will cry out." (Luke 19:40) That seems to be a pretty strong endorsement of a little loudness when the Spirit is moving.

I know there are those who really are uncomfortable with public displays of enthusiasm or strong emotions. And I understand that it is dangerous to equate outward expressions in church as some kind of spiritual maturity, and therefore dangerous and inaccurate when the reverse is assumed: to be uncomfortable doesn't necessarily mean a person is less in tune with spiritual matters. I have a fairly reserved husband, and I know him to be one with a deep understanding of and commitment to the spiritual workings of God, and you won't see him waving a hanky and saying "Glory!" That being said, as one who is wired to be, shall we say usually extroverted and emotional?, it is difficult for me to fully understand why someone wouldn't feel compelled to do a little hand-raising or something! I don't come from a particularly Pentecostal upbringing either, so don't go digging into my childhood to explain my current penchants.

Once again, I digress. Forgive me, Gentle Reader. I have missed you, and we have so much to talk about! Now back to a more serious discussion, one that concerns my wardrobe.

The tactic I've decided to try in order to let a little more of me out is to only buy clothes that make me happy. Starting today. Even though I don't need anything. But when I do, doggone it, I'm going to buy more sparkles,

higher waisted jeans (say no to crack!), more colors, and maybe even a hat. Yes, a hat, and maybe even a jaunty one. And I will continue to crack corny jokes, and I'm okay with that. So don't be surprised if I show up wearing the beads pictured below, and no they aren't an art project that I'm sweetly wearing to support one of my children – I genuinely like them and they make me smile, so I think that's a pretty good reason to wear them. Heck, maybe they'll even make you smile too.

