

Sermon: January 27, 2008

“Gas from the Lord”

A dad is on his way to Sandburg ... probably to watch his son/daughter in some kind of athletic event. It's early yesterday morning. You know how it is. We're always running late ... the gas tank is on "E" ... I'll just fill the tank later.

But NO!!

He runs out of gas right in front of All Saints Lutheran Church. Is this a "sign" or what??? As his car sputters onto our driveway ... our plow-guy (a young 20-year-old ambassador named Josh) stops to see if he can help. The rather frustrated driver asks: "Do you have any gas???" Josh replies: "Well, I don't ... but I think the Lord does!!"

Josh comes into the church and finds me ---- "Hey, Rev ... some guy out there is out of gas. I told him THE LORD HAS GAS. Do we have any here? ... my credibility is at stake!!" We look in the garage ... there it is ---- a full 5-gallon can of gas. Indeed ... THE LORD DOES PROVIDE. Or at least ... our own "Mr. Fix-it" does provide!! Either way ---- we make a stranger happy.

Wouldn't it be nice ... if every time we run out of gas ... someone or something would be there
TO FILL US UP????

Wouldn't it be nice ... when our "spiritual tank" is empty ... "the Lord would provide" and fill us up???
Have you run out of gas lately??

Too many hours at work.

Too many trips to the doctor ... too many rescue missions to your mama's bungalow, to make sure she is ok.

Too many lunches ... too many special-ed conferences with your kid's teachers ... too many trips to re-hab ... too many people you are trying to help, but nothing seems to change.

YOUR TANK IS EMPTY.

You are not sure where to turn ... you wonder where the gas can is.

Yes, it's easy to let life wear us down. It's easy to let the burdens of the day get us off-center. I'm sure it's happened many times ... when your personal gas-gauge reads "E" ... and you're not sure if it will ever feel full again.

This "ja-moke" yesterday ... does he realize how lucky he is? He could have run out of gas two miles south on LaGrange Road ... and some cocky 20-year old could have passed the other way and never given him a second thought. But here is a church ... a full can of gas ... a kid named Josh who cares ... Now ---- would it ever occur to this guy ... to come back later ... find out who the kid is ... and say the word "thank-you"???? I sometimes wonder we get so wrapped up in our own schedule and world ... we don't even say "thanks" for an unexpected act of kindness.

I hear the words of the prophet Isaiah from the 1st lesson this morning:

"Those who have walked in darkness have seen a great light."

I think to myself ----- Don, when is it going to "dawn" on you? ... the most important things in life are the moments & miracles & chance happenings money can't buy. I spend too much of my time (what about you?) walking in darkness ... walking in my own self-induced fog ... walking in my own world. Occasionally there is a moment ... a gas can ... an intersection reminding me there is hope, there is promise, we don't have to let life pull us down.

What are the first words out of Jesus' mouth ... when he begins his ministry? It's in the gospel lesson for today: "**REPENT ... THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR.**"
What comes to your mind when you hear the word "repent"??

Now you have to change your ways???
You need to be sorry for all the stuff you've done wrong???
I guess this is part of it. But here is a better word for repent **HOW ABOUT RE-FUEL??**

We are so good at emptying our tank ... we are used to "running on empty."

But once-in-a-while ----- **WE NEED TO RE-FUEL!!**

We need to step back ... reflect ... pray ... slow down.

When we re-fuel ... the world begins to look a bit different. We can look at life with fresh vision ... with our eyes on what is good and nourishing. When we re-fuel ... we feel hope ... we feel the power of decency, at the very heart of the human spirit. We don't have to dwell on what is wrong ... our cup doesn't have to be half-empty.

So, Jesus proclaims to his followers: **YOU GOTTA RE-FUEL.**

You are so wrapped up in a religion bringing you down ... you are wrapped up in a religion, claiming heaven is up-there-and-out-there-and-only-for-the-chosen-few!!

You are blinded by a system of rules and power.

So, come on!! ----- **REPENT. RE-FUEL.**

The kingdom of God is near. You are standing on it ... breathing it ... living in it. It's before our very eyes!@!

The gas can is in the garage.

All you have to do is turn in.

There is goodness all around us ... you are just afraid to believe in it!!

So, it's time to do a few things differently.

You don't need to stay on "empty." Don't dwell on it ... do something about it.

*Take some time ... come to a Bible study on the Psalms!! ----- wouldn't this be fun!!

*Bring one of your Catholic friends to "our" Ash Wednesday service!

*Get the moth-balls out of your wallet ...and share some cash with someone who would never think of asking you for anything.

*Find out the snow-plow guy's name and send him a "thank-you" note.

*Give a "Mattie Stepanek book" to a teen-ager, whose self-esteem has been dented.

Take some time.

Look at who and what you are.

Repent. Re-fuel.

You just never know ... when a simple act of kindness on your part ... for someone who is running on empty ... when they look into your eyes ... they just might see a little glimpse of Jesus.

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