

Sermon: July 27, 2008
“Walkin’ tall with Dorian”

Several weeks ago ... Kristie Machay was in church ... turned out to be her last time here before she left us ... after battling and living with cancer for more than 3 years. The next day ... one of the men’s-club-guys calls me. “Rev, I need to talk to you. I visited with Kristie in church yesterday. She was so graceful ... and I could tell she was hurting. I swear ... in her face ... I could see God.”

“Keith ...” I responded ... “it’s in the face of our brothers and sisters ... precisely there ... that we come face-to-face with the One who gives us life. Especially someone like Krsitie ... who carries herself with such gentleness, courage, and faith.”

We can tell so much ... by looking into someone’s face.
We see the journey of the human spirit ----- joy, sorrow, victory, defeat, weariness, patience, courage, and grace. Look into someone’s eyes ... see the wrinkles on your brother’s brow ... the smile, the frown.

Our faces are roadmaps ... our eyes are blueprints.
Our faces can invite someone into our lives ... they can also push others away.

For a moment or two ... I’d like to talk about what it means to be “beautiful.”

In so many ways ... we have this whole thing backwards.
BEAUTY has become an “outside job.” From our lawns to our cars to our bodies & faces ----- we worry so much about how we and our possessions look on the outside. Many of us are afraid to grow older ... because we don’t LOOK THE SAME. Kids are often afraid of their own bodies, because they don’t MEASURE UP.

BEAUTY ----- it’s about your soul.
In the Bible ... beauty means: “to radiate God’s presence.”
Now ... when you kid comes up to you and cries out ---- “I hate my body” well, telling them it’s ok, because “you radiate God’s presence” ... this probably won’t fly with them!!

But think about it ...
---when you believe in yourself ...
---when you can look at the world with a sense of gratitude and grace ...
---when you believe ... in your soul ... there is a “higher power” at work in the world ...
---when you feel connected to life and other people ...
---when you see “beauty” as something spiritual ...
Then it matters not how big or small you are ... nor does it matter how young or old you are ...
it’s not about scars or wrinkles or age or youth ----- beauty is about your soul.
It’s about courage & grace & humility.

A few years ago a young boy named Dorian came to Heartland Children’s Home.
Is it my imagination or not????? ... but have there been a larger-than-normal amount of heart-wrenching stories about kids in the news lately?? Little kids caught in the cross-fires of drive-by shootings ... a little two year old in Orland, who just drowned in his back-yard pool ...it hurts ... yes, it hurts a lot.
Dorian was alone in his house, sleeping in a crib. There is a fire ... the burning drapes fall into the crib.
Dorian loses both his legs ... one of his arms ... an ear ... and his whole body is burned.

When Dorian first arrived at Heartland ... they were concerned about our kids seeing him for the first time.
Sometimes you see someone so badly scarred and hurt ... well, you “run” the other way.
I wasn’t worried about our kids.
It’s what they learn on Sunday morning ... on Monday nights ...
It’s what we preach ... it’s who “Fred” is ...

When we arrived ... little Dorian is sitting on the front porch --- one arm, two stumps
and he crawls to the vans to greet us.

Our kids are almost fighting each other ----- to be the first ones to hold and kiss him.

Dorian is now 11 years old. He's had multiple major surgeries ----- to replace skin, to heal his wounds.
He and Quinton are best friends together they are poster-kids for what is right and beautiful in this world.

Dorian's toughest years may be ahead of him:

junior high ... then high school ... college? ... lookin' for a job????

People will always stare ... they will always look ... they will always wonder what happened.

Dorian's body is a road-map for how unfair and tough life can be.

Dorian's heart and soul are road-maps for courage, inner fortitude ... and how love can change your life!!

Life is a journey.

Each of us ----- whether 4 or 94 ... yes, each of tries everyday to fit-in ... to find our way ... to see if we can
make a difference. We work. We play. We make mistakes. We have a few victories along the way.

This morning I think of the words in the book of Romans:

If God is for us ... who can be against us??

I am convinced ----- neither death nor life ... angels or rulers ... things present or things to come ...

height, depth, any other creature ...

there is nothing in all creation that can ever separate us from God's love.

My anger and my pride. My self-inflicted business. My self-centeredness.
Someone like Dorian, who faces a life-time of challenges he never deserved.

When little people leave this earth, way before their time.

A world at war ... religions trying to "out-save" each other.

A world in which more-and-more people ---- many of you ---- are hurting.

In the midst of all this ----- "there is nothing in all creation ... that can ever separate
us from God's love."

I've done a lot of reflecting, praying, and hoping lately. I guess that's part of growing older and being in the
same place for a long time. Maybe I haven't learned much ... but I have learned this:

You can go to mass everyday ...

You can come to church every week ...

You can say and believe "all the right things" ...

***BUT THERE IS ONLY ONE KIND OF RELIGION THAT MATTERS ----- and it's embedded deep within
your heart and soul.*** It comes out in the way you walk ... and talk ... and work ... in the way we handle

life's twists-and-turns.

It's about the INNER BEAUTY God gives to each of us.

Maybe this is why Keith saw God's face in a lady named Kristie.

Maybe it's why a young man named Dorian is one of the most beeeeoootiful guys you'll ever meet.

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