

Sermon: March 30, 2008

“Tired of fighting?”

Too often ----- I look at life as a “battle-ground.”

It’s kind-of like ----- you wake up, start your day ... and you feel like “it me vs. the world!!”

We spend lot of time battling, don’t we???

We battle cancer.

We battle old age ... and arthritis.

Sometimes we battle our own families ...and then off to work, and the “battle” continues.

We fight racism and injustice. After surgery ---- we battle our insurance company.

In sports and music ... we fight to be “on top.”

We fight to get into the “right” school ... we battle for class rank, scholarships, and a good ACT score.

This winter --- we’ve battled the snow and cold.

This afternoon ... we’ll battle the “Methodists” on the basketball court.

As kids ... you fight to be noticed.

Ministers ... we are some of the worst ----- always fighting for attention.

As parents, grandparents, teachers, sales-people, employees in a big company being an organist, singing in the choir, limo-driver or short-order-cook ----- we fight to be somebody ... we battle to make a difference and to feel good about ourselves.

DO YOU EVER HAVE A “MOMENT” ... even a short one ... when you are “at peace” with who and where you are???

This doesn’t mean you are totally content ... it doesn’t mean you wouldn’t like some things in your life to be different ...

But ----- do you have times when you can step back ... look at yourself and your world?? ... and say:

This is me. This is my world. This is where and who I am ... and, for now ---- IT’S OK!!

It’s not that you are giving-up ... it’s not that you are no longer trying ... it’s not about “losing your fight” or “losing your edge” ...

RATHER ----- it’s the humility and grace to be able to accept the moment for what it is.

WE DON’T ALWAYS HAVE TO FIGHT.

WE DON’T ALWAYS HAVE TO BE AT ODDS WITH THE WORLD.

Often times ----- the greatest act of courage ... the greatest sign of peace ... is being able to accept and deal with the moment we are in.

It’s interesting ... often frustrating ----- that religion & race have been so much a part of the political landscape recently. I’m waiting tfor the candidates to call my office ... to get our “take” on the whole thing ... but, for some reason ---- *the phone hasn’t rung yet!!*

I get a “kick” out of these preachers (and --- I’m talkin’ about myself here, too) ...

It matters not if you are from a 10,000-member black-baptist church on the south-side of Chicago ... or from a southwest suburban Catholic church with 5000 families ... or you go to one of those infamous Texas-mega-churches lining the highway on our way to Heartland Children’s Home ... or you are a member of this humble assembly here ----- it seems like “we preachers” take Jesus ... and turn him into what we want him to be.

We don’t “own” Jesus.

We don’t “preach” Jesus.

We don’t “speak for” Jesus.

What we need to do ----- is WALK IN HIS SPIRIT.

Jesus is ---- “every man” ... “every woman” ... “every child.”

Jesus is a spirit ... meeting you wherever you are.

On your death-bed? ... in re-hab? ... at the end of the bench where you sit during every baseball game? ...
in a classroom, where you are the only kid living with autism? ... in a messy kitchen, where you
try to provide for your family?

Jesus calls each of us ----- to try to accept and to “live in” the moment.

He lets us know ----- we don't have to claw-and-fight for our dignity every moment of every day ...
we don't have to tear someone else down, to build ourselves up ... being “Christian” doesn't mean we close
ourselves off from the fruits and goodness of other religions ...

TO BELIEVE IN JESUS IS TO BELIEVE IN OURSELVES.

To believe in Jesus is to know ----- OUR DIGNITY is a gift ... it can never be taken away.

I love the gospel lesson this morning. It's so raw ... so human.

After his death ... Jesus' disciples have a “spiritual experience” ----- Jesus appears to them.
They are excited. They don't totally understand how this happens ... but they can't help but share the good
news. When they tell Thomas well, Thomas is so caught-up in his “own little world” ...
he can't accept what his friends have shared.

“UNLESS JESUS APPEARS TO ME ... YES, ME ---- I'LL NEVER BELIEVE!!”

This is so like me, at times.

So often ---- I believe when it's CONVENIENT for me.

I see Jesus where I want to.

“Well, Don ---- GET OVER YOURSELF!!” this is not all about you!!

I think of a few of the words of one of my favorite poems ---- “The Dash” ...

I read of a man who stood to speak ... at the funeral of his friend.

He referred on her tombstone, from the beginning until the end ...

IT MATTERS NOT HOW MUCH YOU OWN ...the cars, the house, the cash ...

WHAT MATTERS is how you live and love ... and how you SPEND YOUR DASH.

Jesus lived.

Jesus loved.

He still live.

He still loves.

Easter Sunday was last week ... “the spirit of Easter” is now and everyday!!

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