

Sermon: March 9,2008  
“Unwrap them dry bones!!”

Whoa ... do we need hope!@!!

What is it? ---- the price of gas? ... these long political campaigns? ... the Bulls doing so badly? ... the weather? ... this air of negativity hanging around us????

We need causes and people we can believe in????? ... I mean --- REALLY BELIEVE IN!!

We need to re-focus on what is right and good. We need to re-discover ---- why we are here, what we stand for, what we believe in!!

Honestly? ... religion and the church aren't much help.

We have rules & regulations ---- more designed to keep people out, instead of inviting them in.

Rather than embodying a gospel of liberation, freedom, openness, and justice ... we get caught-up in games of control, and power, and who's right and who's wrong.

We turn Jesus into the kind of “savior” that's convenient for us.

We've turned the Bible into something it was never meant to be!!

In the midst of all this carnage????? ----- a valley of “dry bones” ... and Lazarus: confined to a tomb, and afraid to come out.

As in the first lesson for this morning ----- have you ever felt like a *valley of dry bones*???

Tired? Worn-out? Discouraged?

When you look at the way people talk to each other, treat each other ... when you see yourself and folks around you struggling ... yes, the world can be tough and cruel. It's easy to lose hope.

And maybe like Lazarus ... you hide in the tomb. You feel like parts of you are dying ----- physically, spiritually, emotionally.

What caused Lazarus to die????? ----- HE WAS BOUND UP!!

It's easy to get this way. Often we let anger & frustration & jealousy & bad thoughts control and define us.

What do we need? ----- a word of hope.

We need someone like the prophet Ezekiel ... who isn't afraid to get into the middle of all these dry bones and invites us to RISE-UP ----- to rattle and shake and shimmy and move forward with new-found courage.

We need someone like Jesus ----- to walk inside the tomb, where we're hiding ... he sees our hearts-and-souls all bound up “with the troubles of the world” ... and he declares to us and those around us:

UNBIND HIM, LET HIM GO ----- GET RID OF THE GUNK!!

I certainly can't speak for you ... but my “bones” get dry, once-in-a-while.

I sometimes doubt ... and wonder ... and pull-back.

We can become afraid to trust anyone ... afraid to give. So we pull-in unto ourselves ... we get very me-oriented ... we become protective and selfish.

We retreat ... go inside our tomb ... where “stuff-and-gunk” bind us up.

Maybe we get cynical ... too judgmental ... less open to those around us.

The answer? ----- LOVE!! With a good dose of GIVING.

It's about NOT BEING AFRAID TO LOVE AND TO GIVE.

Loving ain't easy.

It can hurt ... it can sting ... you don't always get it back!

And giving? ... same thing. It's not always pretty. People often say “giving is a two-way street.”

Boloney!!

GIVING is mostly “one-way.” When you love ... when you share ... when you give ----- there is no guarantee you'll get anything in return. Sure --- we often expect to ... but ..... if you love and give – expecting a return – then you're doing it for the wrong reasons.

WE LOVE ... AND WE GIVE ----- not to get anything ... but because it's the legacy and spirit  
Jesus has left us.

Remember "the good ol' days"????? .... when you didn't have to be afraid to let your kids spend the day at the  
park? The door of the neighborhood church --- always open. We laughed at the snow and every tulip  
was a miracle!@!??

I remember sitting on the grey-painted steps of my grandparents' bungalow in Roseland. In my kid-like  
mind ... I thought all grandparents in the world lived in Roseland ----- an area stuffed-full of grandmas  
and grandpas!! I watched my beer-bellied Swedish grandpa cut the law ----- five feet by five feet, with  
a lawn-mower with no motor. The mower just kind-of bent the grass over ... and then when the grass  
straightened-up ... well, he went over it again.

Afterwards ... grandpa sat on the porch ... an under-shirt with no sleeves ... shorts and socks that never  
matched ... drinking a Hamms' beer, listening to the White Sox on the radio.

He was the happiest man in the world ... and I would say: I WANT TO BE LIKE GRANDPA SOMEDAY!!  
(Guess what? ... I am!!)

Grandpa gave me everything: quarters, a bamboo fishing pole ... his time, his love ... ice-cream.  
I would go home and say to my mom and dad: GRANDPA AND GRANDMA ARE THE RICHEST PEOPLE  
IN THE WORLD!!

I never suspected .... when they died ... they had no money.

I look back ... I reflect.

They taught me everyday ----- RICH is not about "how much."  
GIVING is not about "how much."

LOVING is not something you do "from your abundance."

NO: we aren't call to give & love from our abundance or left-overs.

*We love and give out of our poverty.*

It's ironic, in life.

When I feel the most empty ... this is when I'm "the most full."

When my bones are dry ... when the tomb is tempting ... yes, it's easy to pull-back and give-up.

But ----- *Jesus "calls us out" ... our bones rattle ...*  
*and ----- THERE IS A NEW DAY.*

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