

Sermon: May 4, 2008
"Talking and Spilling"

I get so discouraged ... sometimes ... when I reflect on the state of religion and the church.
I know things have surfaced ... in reaction to this whole thing surrounding Rev. Wright ---- lots of talk about
"the black church" and "the white church."

There seems to be so much emphasis on PREACHERS.

And, of course, we draw a lot of attention to ourselves ... especially when we have the audacity to say things
like --- "God has spoken to me" and "I am here to give you God's Word."

When we think we are so special ... that God actually speaks to us, and we are now the bearers of God's
word ... well, we ought to reflect on these few words from the 2nd lesson this morning:

"Humble yourselves, therefore ... under the mighty hand of God."

We need a good dose of humility.

Don't write articles or preach sermons or make speeches ----- claiming God talks to you.
Jesus had some good conversations with God ... people like Moses probably had a couple ...
but you and me? ... preachers?

God doesn't "talk to us" ... *God is in the very fiber of life itself.*

He nudges us ... inspires us ... pushes us ... forgives & loves & cares for us.

But let us not be so presumptuous that we claim to know God's word and his will for us.
WE ARE HUMAN. WE ARE WHITE. WE ARE BLACK ----- and every color in-between.
We are all God's creation ... strong and weak, bold and frail.

Jesus' words in the gospel today are so beautiful and graceful and humble.

Jesus is talking to God (His Father) ... he knows he's about ready to leave this world ... and he's afraid
for the followers he's leaving behind:

"Father, I'm afraid.

I have told my followers about you ... please watch over them.

I am no longer in the world, but they are.

Holy Father ----- protect them, so they may be one."

In a world where preachers have become entertainers.

In a world where churches have become clubs.

In a world where you can't tell who's Christian and who's not ----- we need to discover ... or
re-discover ... the essence of our own soul.

In a few moments ... we'll gather around the Lord's table. I remember, as a kid ----- my pastor teaching us
about Communion. He was very concerned that we understood how our interpretation of Communion is
different from the Catholics. It was all about what happens to the bread and wine.

Well ----- Communion is not all about the bread and wine.

Bread is bread ... wine is wine. The most important thing about sharing Communion is NOT what happens to
the bread and wine ... it's what happens to you: your soul, your heart, your life!!

You can take Communion here ... in a hospital bed ... or in a tree-fort --- it matters not. What matters is this:
gathering around the altar reminds us how much God cares for us and loves us, as we walk out the door.
Then ... instead of bragging about our religion ... instead of wearing our religion on our sleeve ... we wear our
religion exactly where it belongs ----- in our heart, in the way we carry ourselves later today and tomorrow.

A great story this week. A young lady hits her first-ever home-run ... and it happens to be in a college softball
play-off game. She is so excited ... she falls near first base ... can hardly move.

So, the players from the OTHER TEAM ... they pick her up ... and carry her around the bases ... making sure
she touches each one. There ... in a spontaneous act of human goodness ... I hear the prophetic words:

“I will raise you up on eagles’ wings ... bear you on the breath of dawn ... make you to shine like the sun ... and HOLD YOU IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND.”

Then there is Pete ----- 30 years old, entrepreneur.

He’s in his car at 6:45 AM ... waiting for a meeting to start. He notices a homeless man standing outside the offices of “Streetwise” ----- a newspaper that homeless people sell to try to make a few dollars. Pete senses there is a connection between him and this gentleman ----- who is obviously cold, wearing a tattered shirt and tie. He invites the gentleman into his car to warm-up ‘til the doors open. The homeless gentleman is Troy ...

Pete learns a bit of Troy’s story: his wife died, he lost his job as a laborer ... doesn’t drink or smoke or do drugs ... trying to get some money together and find a place to live.

Pete makes a deal with Troy ----- meet me here at 6:45 AM tomorrow, and we’ll try to work something out.

Pete realizes ----- Troy could be me. Most of us are a couple pay checks away from being homeless.

Pete sets up a web-site ... e-mails some folks he knows ... and when Troy shows-up promptly at 6:45 the next morning ----- he has \$10,000 put together to help Troy get a “place” and begin putting his life back together.

Pete is Troy’s “angel” ... and soon ----- Troy will be an angel unto others.

This morning ... our prayers are with Danica Perez as she leaves tomorrow for Nicaragua, to serve in the Peace Corp. We are so proud of you.

As we gather for our ladies’ lunch later today ... we will try to make a difference in the life of Dawn Dubsky.

This 32-year old marathoner and children’s nurse ... she returned from Africa ... and was diagnosed with malaria. All 4 of her limbs have been amputated below the joints. I was just made aware that I performed her mom’s wedding 9 years ago. The family will be at our luncheon.

What can we do? What is God’s will? What does God say? ----- we don’t know.

All we can do is care ... and give ... and help her face the un-known.

The \$1500 we will share with her mom won’t make the pain go away ... it’s just a dent ... but it’s our way of trying to say: **YOU WILL NEVER WALK THIS JOURNEY ALONE.**

This morning I’m getting Communion ready.

I knock over the chalice ... and wine spills all over the place ---- the stains now grace the altar cloth.

When I was a young minister and tried “to do all things right” ... I would have been very upset with myself.

After all ----- Communion was about taking care of the bread and wine.

But ... no ...

We need to spill more!!

--spill out our heart.

--spill out our soul.

--spill out more goodness and love.

So, live each day and spill the wine, spill out your heart.

Maybe this is God’s will.

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