

Sermon: September 7, 2008

“Let is all come out!”

This “Grandparents’ Day” is a sad one in Frankfort, Illinois. They call them the “neighborhood grandparents.”

Luella and Clyde Reils ----- died when their house exploded yesterday.

So, today ---a family and a community mourn.

Just this morning in our prayer book:

*Donna has a new grandson.

*Ian’s and Devyn’s grandpa turns 90.

*Jimmy and Lauren Melka’s grandma died early today.

*A grandpa is recovering from a heart attack.

*Two grandmas from our church share the same room at Palos Hospital.

I think of our youngest son Quinton ... he doesn’t have a “traditional” grandma or grandpa.

But he does have a “grandma” born out of love ----- yes, the best kind!!

And, of course ... we live in a world where more and more grandparents are raising their grand-kids.

Yes, your love knows no bounds ... but the bones get weary at the end of the day.

Jude and I are at the stage in our lives ----- our parents and grandparents are gone.

Don’t you? ... even at your advanced age? ----- long for the days when:

*you could do no wrong at grandma’s house ...

*ice cream was the main course 3 times a day ...

*you could strike out 4 times in a little league game ... and grandpa still thought “you were the best” ...

*carnivals and ball games and dollar bills in the mail were weekly miracles ...

At my grandparents’ home ----- I didn’t know racial prejudice even existed. There was no worry about class-rank and being “cut” from the team and saying mean things about others.

LOVE was unconditional ... free ... uncomplicated.

But --- we live today in complicated times. We live in a world of locked doors and having to be suspicious of others. We live in a world in which people are convinced ---- saying negative things about someone is more effective than being positive. Not here!! I refuse to believe it!!

OK --- so there is no answer.

BUT --- there is a choice.

I and you ... by the grace of God ... yes, we have the power to choose how we want to live our lives.

Unselfishly? As a “giver”? Living with gentleness? Being a beacon of goodness?

It’s our choice. We don’t have to be ugly.

Like it says in the 2nd lesson for today:

“Let us lay aside the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.”

I walk into the funeral home to meet the family.

The first person I meet is a grandmother. You can tell she is sad. Her wrinkles seem deeper ... her eyes moist ... her heart heavy. I introduce myself ... we talk. She looks at me:

“Reverend ... you seem so young to have your own church!!”

I love this lady.

It’s one thing you gotta love about grandmas: **THEY CAN LIE AND TELL THE TRUTH AT THE SAME TIME.**

The deceased is only 36 years old.

Before the service ... his best friend from childhood has to talk to me.

Brian was brilliant, he says ----- his imagination ... he invented ... he was fun ... we ran cross-country together ... so many dreams and ideas.

Reverend ...his dis-order ... it prevented him from being able to express everything that was inside of him.

*There was so much he wanted to share, but he couldn't.
So much about Brian we didn't know. I know this frustrated him.*

Brian ended his frustration.

I'm thinking to myself ----- I'm a preacher ... you may be a mechanic ... teacher or artist, salesperson
or factory worker ... a butcher or baker or candlestick maker.

How often has someone had something he/she wants to share ... something deep inside ...
and I'm so pre-occupied with who I am and with what I'm doing ... that the other person keeps it all inside!@!!
I get so often caught up in myself ... well, the "other person" doesn't have a chance.

In a way --- this is what grandparents do.

They live for us. The sacrifice and they give ... so we can taste of the GOODNESS OF LIFE.
It's what Jesus did. It's why he fed 5000 and cast out demons ... it's why he forgave and he loved ----- so
others might taste of life's goodness and be reminded of their importance in God's kingdom.

In life ----- death is our teacher.

Death is our rabbi.

Death teaches us ... often with pain ... about what's important in this world and what's not.
As I think about this young man Brian ... I think of a kingdom where he is now "free" ...
and the words of Father James Kavanaugh once again ring in my ear and through my soul:

All the joy in the world takes possession of me today.

*Unending nights and darkened days are forgotten ... failures and un-planned frustrations, rejections
and angry confrontations ---- they have lost their power.*

*Deserting friends I once missed, bitter enemies I once feared, promises never kept ---
they seem as nothing.*

The sky belongs to me.

The birds are assembled in concert only for my ears to hear.

The breeze is music enough ... the bubbling streams a drama.

I am a stranger nowhere ... an alien no place on sea or planet. I am forever at home in my world.

Why????

*Because God is everywhere ... love abounds ... and I am grateful for every moment of my life ...
grateful, most of all, to be irrevocably alive!!*

There are times when the world seems like "too much."

But we are here to be reminded:

life can hurt ... yet it's worth the struggle ... worth the journey.

A young man is at peace.

A community mourns.

Each of us faces a new day.

And grandma reminds us ----- it's all worth it.

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September 7, 2008