

Sermon: November 9, 2008  
“The church gym ... and life ...”

I try --- often with little or no success --- to talk on Sunday mornings about “stuff” that may or may not be on your mind, as you walk in the door. The church needs to speak to the varied journeys you take on the Tuesdays and Wednesdays of your world. If we don’t speak to your heart ... well, you “ain’t gonna come back!!” We need to give you some perspective ... a dash of hope ... so you can cope with the world around you.

*This is what Jesus did.*

Jesus didn’t just march into town ... like some paid inspirational speaker ... and preach to the masses.

Jesus came to and spoke to what people had to deal with everyday.

Jesus talked about the economy ... he talked about “not fitting in” ... he talked about life’s issues.

The good stuff. The tough stuff.

This is why we are called to be “the body of Christ” ... we need to carry on and somehow fulfill

Jesus’ mission to his people. If we don’t ----- then there is no reason for us to be here.

Our country has been through a lot ... and it’s been especially painful for many of you over the past couple months. The economy ... the intensity of the presidential campaign ... people have strong feelings. And ... it seems like people want to talk about it. They are often hesitant ... because religion and politics are so personal ... and “heated discussions” are not always comfortable. Too often they are divisive.

Well ----- I’ve had enough divisiveness ... how about you???

Had a wedding yesterday ... in a restaurant full of “un-churched” people!@!!

It was an “older-mature” couple ----- just them, a best man, a matron of honor up-front. The “best man” comes up to me ... “Are you the minister?” YES ----- how did you guess? ... as I was putting on my robe.

He wants to know: “What kind of Lutheran are you?” ... my response: A DARN GOOD ONE, THANKS FOR ASKING!@!!

Well ... he wants to know “what brand” ... so, I tell him we are an independent church ... very much in line with the tradition of the ELCA. He looks at me: “Well, the wife and I used to be that ... but we just joined a Missouri Synod Church.” I ask him ---- is that like a promotion????

No, he responds ... but you folks are a bit liberal for my taste.

I smile ... and reply: “But I notice ... your buddy didn’t ask your pastor to do this wedding!@!!”

*Oh, the sound of silence.*

Its seems like some folks are just anxious “to pick a fight” with almost anyone!!

Same day. I’m at the Riviera ---- in search of fitness and sermon material. After exercising ... I run into Bill at the bar. “So, Rev ...” he asks ... “What’s your take on the election???”

Knowing Bill ... and assuming he thinks he knows me ... I sense he wants some kind of argument.

Well ... like it or not ... I give him “my take.”

*“Bill ---- right now ... I, like you, have one President. His name is George W. Bush.*

*On January 20 ... I, like you, will have one President. His name is Barack Obama.*

*On Tuesday night ... John McCain ... when he knew he would not win ... he gave an inspiring and gracious concession speech. He was encouraging --- to our nation, and to the man who won. His words were laced with grace, courage, and goodness. This man, who was a POW in Vietnam alongside my cousin, has been through more adversity than I’ll ever know. I deeply respect and admire him.*

*That same night ... 250,000 of our brother-and-sister citizens ... they gathered in a public park ... to welcome and encourage our next President ---- without incident, in a spirit of peace.*

*I have no TAKE on the election ... I just know what happened ... and I’m grateful.”*

I always have been ... I am now ... I always will be ----- PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN. Not because we are always right ... not because we have to get our way ... but because of the invitation engraved on the Statue of Liberty ----- opening our hearts, our souls, our borders ... to those who are in search

of the most precious of all gifts: a chance, an opportunity, freedom, a fresh start.

I'm watching our youth group kids in the gym, at our overnight this past Friday ... 7<sup>th</sup> graders up through seniors in high school.

I see the way they treat each other ----- the encouragement, the joy, the laughter and respect. I get a lot of school and village newsletters crossing my desk. Most of them use lots of space to recognize those young people who have won awards and accomplished lots.

As I watch our kids ... I think of all the retreats ... the discussions around lighted candles ... the campfires ... I picture the kids ---- many of them yours --- who have grown up in this humble church.

I look at a young man. He's in high school next door. Every morning ... as he walks the hallways ... he feels lost among the 3000+ students who attend the school. He wants to try out for the soccer team ... but he knows he won't make it. Well ... he does make the team ... but not once during the year does he get his uniform dirty.

How about the orchestra? ... well, he doesn't have enough time.

His mom doesn't say he has to ... but things have been kind-of "tight" financially since his dad died.

So ... if he wants to do things like get a used car or go to the prom ... he has to work after school and most weekends.

Yes, he will graduate. Not with honors ... but he does ok.

On honors night? ... he will show up .. but his name will not be called.

*"Blessed are the meek."*

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit."*

*"Blessed are the humble."*

On a Friday night in our gym. Around the campfire in Oregon, Illinois ----- there are no honors.

Why? ... "because we are all in this together."

Here ... thanks to many "un-named heroes" like you ...

*This young man is special.*

*He's in first place.*

*He takes his place on the bench of life ----- where everybody starts, and everybody finishes.*

I'm proud to be an American.

Because of people like this young man ... and those who love him and stand by him.

I'm even proud to be an "independent Lutheran."

For Friday nights in a humble gym.

And ... to all you veterans, families of veterans, lovers of veterans ...

**TUESDAY IS YOUR DAY!!**

*And everyday ... you are in our hearts.*

Don Borling

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