

Sermon: December 20, 2009

**“The soul”**

Mary finds out she has been “chosen.” She is young and confused ... yet in the midst of this, she cries out:

*“My soul magnifies the Lord ...”*

I want my soul to magnify the Lord ... I’d love my soul to testify to the goodness of God’s presence.

How about you?

How is your soul today???

I think a lot about the “soul.”

I don’t know exactly how to define it ... or even how to talk about it.

THE SOUL ----- *it’s the very essence of who we are.*

When we strip away all the “gunk” ... when we get beneath the surface stuff ... when we can look beyond all the “stuff” getting in the way ... *there is our soul.*

It’s who we are.

It’s about how we feel about ourselves and life itself.

It’s about what turns us on and fuels our life’s path.

Maybe the only way to talk about the soul is to tell stories “about the soul.”

I’m sure each of you have people in your life ... not necessarily drinking buddies or best friends ... but people you see ... people who intersect your life ----- and they *radiate something special.*

They have a gentle kind-of energy ... a spirit of goodness ... a karma ----- and it radiates warmth.

There is a group meeting here on Saturday morning. They practice an art called Tai Chi.

I’m not sure exactly ... but it’s about inner strength, self-expression, respect & fitness. The dress in black ... have signature kinds-of movements.

The leader is a gentleman named Bill Gray.

About my age. His dark skin and glasses speak of respect. Just the way he walks ...

when he sees you, he stops what he is doing ... he kind-of bows in your direction ... it’s like he says, without having to say a word: *“the divine in me ... honors the divine in you.”*

There is a word for this ---- “namaste.”

Bill respects this place.

He knows this place --- our church --- is sacred.

And ... when “Bill is in the building” ... well, you can feel his presence. This decency, good will, love ... it’s all there. I can be in my office ... he can be all the way in the gym ----- yet I know he is here!!

You know what it’s like ----- there are some people who simply RADIATE GOODNESS.

You also know what it’s like .... there are some people ... when they enter a room ----- it’s like they SUCK ALL THE GOODNESS right out of it.

Yes, today I think of the goodness of the soul ...

\*the young virgin, who wonders why God has chosen her ...

\*the machinist at Nabisco, working the night shift ...

\*the bagger at Randy’s Market on a hectic Saturday ...

\*teaching Tai Chi at the local Lutheran parish ...

\*the banquet waitress at Silver Lake Country Club ...

\*the nurse’s aid, who cleans up after people who can no longer take care of themselves ...

YOUR HANDS ... YOUR EYES ... YOUR HEART ----- they reflect something deeper, richer, and more divine than you ever thought possible.

**It’s your soul ... it’s who you are.**

Often I talk about Paquito ... our Filipino angel ... who makes all our cakes.  
When he comes here in the morning to drop off a cake ... his smile, his limp ... well, he kind-of makes the  
building jump for joy. When you see him ... you can't help but smile and give him a hug.  
It's his soul.

The way he walks and takes care of the disabled adults where he lives.  
Not famous people ... just ordinary folks doing ordinary things ... WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY SPIRIT.

I'm thinking about Russ. His wife Char and family come here ... they are quiet members.  
Two years ago I'm having a beer with him at Silver Lake Country Club. He loves golf ... he is a starter at  
another golf course. He is gentle and kind.

Now? ----- he lives with Alzheimer's ... doesn't even know who I am.  
All of us have been touched by this disease. The hardest thing is ----- Alzheimer's turns someone you love into  
a person you hardly even know anymore. It cuts at your dignity and pride. When your loved-one suffers, it's  
almost like he/she dies everyday.

But --- inside Russ.  
Inside Jesus' mother.  
Inside Bill Gray and Paquito.  
Inside you and me ----- THERE IS A SOUL.  
Our soul is God-given ... human-driven ... *always a gift!!*

Now, we can lose it for a while.  
We can let other things get in the way ...  
especially this time of the year ... when the clutter & craziness & selfishness of the season  
too often defines us.

But --- our SOULS are who we are.

This morning I think of a young man named Sean ... who died in a car accident this week.  
Bob Buikema ... our tree-guy ... recovering from a heart-attack ...  
Vera ... Christmas in a re-hab center ...  
Our soldiers overseas ...  
ALL THEY HAVE IS THE MESSAGE.  
The manger.  
A child.  
A naïve young mother.  
The miracle ... the peace ... the hope.

Even in death ... in the midst of our most painful of journeys ... we know:  
OUR SOUL NEVER DIES.  
Wrinkled, at times.  
Buried, hopefully not for long.  
It is the one gift THAT LASTS FOREVER.

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December 20, 2009

