

Sermon: July 26, 2009

“All about GIVING”

As we get older ... well, we reflect ----- about life ... about “stuff” ... about what’s important and what’s not. Life ... really ... *is about giving*. It’s taking what we have ... who we are ... where we are ----- and using these moments and intersections to make a difference.

- bringing a casserole to share on a Tuesday night fun-fest.
- trying to find a way to help your kid pay for college or trade-school.
- giving a few bucks to the church ... providing for our family ...
- going the extra mile at work ... calling your parents on a Wednesday night ...
- spending half your day-off at church ... making sure the steak fry is ready for all those who show up ...

WHEN WE LOSE THAT perspective about giving ... when giving becomes a burden ...
when we pull back and are hesitant to share what we have ...
when we start thinking about what we don’t have, instead of rejoicing in what we do have ...
when we look at life’s moments and think --- “what’s in it for me?” ... instead of
“what in it for us????” ...
when “getting stuff” becomes our theme song ...
THIS IS WHEN WE SHRIVEL UP AND DIE ... and we become less than God creates us to be.

You just gotta love Jesus. Not only is he our savior ... hey, he’s clever and so in-tune with the human spirit. And ... you don’t have to be a so-called “Christian” to believe in Jesus ... you just have to be human ... and open to the incredible diversity of the human spirit.

Jesus is becoming very popular ... and ----- his disciples don’t like it. They kind-of want to keep Jesus to themselves. Jesus wants his disciples to be “givers.” So ... when 5000 people need something to eat at the end of a long day ... Jesus sees an opportunity to teach his disciples what life is all about.

Jesus looks at the crowd ... then turns to Phillip.

“Phillip we need to get some bread to feed the crowd.”

Phillip ... whose cup is usually half-empty ... responds: “Six months’ wages wouldn’t buy enough bread to feed everyone.”

Then there is Andrew ----- “A boy here has offered 5 loaves and 2 fish ... but this is nothing compared to what we need!!”

Jesus is troubled by their response ... but not surprised. Come on ----- Don Borling, Bob, Linda, Irene, Lucille, and Calvin ... *when will you ever understand????*

Life isn’t about what we don’t have ... it’s about what we do have.

Phillip and Andrew they look at the crowd ... they see the 5 loaves and 2 fish ... and they want to send the people away ... because “there will never be enough.”

Jesus ----- well, he sees THE GIFT. A young boy ... willing to share all he has. So, what does Jesus do???? He says “thanks” and blesses the gift. And ----- **THERE IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO GO AROUND!!**

The miracle here is not feeding 5000 people. Hey, half your grandmas have done this on a Sunday afternoon!

The miracle is the PERSPECTIVE.

It’s the blessing ... it’s how you see your “cup.”

The miracle is in the giving and sharing.

Getting older is interesting, isn’t it????

Last night at the steak fry ----- all the candles lit, in honor and in memory of folks so important to us.

There is one thing all these people had in common: *they were givers*. Not accumulators ... not takers ... but ----- sharers of what they had.

This is what is so fun about being a “Jesus person.”
Jesus teaches us to look at what we have ... to look at what others have ... and to rejoice in it.

Last week ... once again ... someone broke into my office.
Broke down the doors. ... turned everything upside down ... all for \$175 in petty cash.
All this meat-ball had to do is come and ask ----- hey, I’m in trouble ... I need some help ... he/she would have had the money in a heart-beat. Now ... you can rob us everyday ... but our love-bucket will always be here ... it will never go away.

When you are a “giver” ... the door is open.
When you are a “taker” ... then you have to tear something down to get what you think you want.

It was a couple years ago ... that Lucille started coming here with the young men from her group home.
Yes ---- 70-year-old Lucille ... and her band of disabled adults from St. Coletta’s ... some of our favorite people.

I remember that first Sunday. I’m preaching ... and I hear a couple “amen’s” in the background.
We Lutherans don’t shout “amen.” As my sermon goes on ... the “amen’s” become more frequent.
I’m thinking to myself ----- “I like this feedback!!”

After church ... someone follows me into my office: “Pastor, I found the amen-shouting very distracting ... I’m sure you did, too!!” I turn around ... I think of the disciples whose cup is always half-empty ...
“Quite frankly ... I found the “amen’s” very inspiring and a breath of fresh air!!”
As Lucille left the church ... I saw all our people hugging her ... welcoming her into our humble community.

Everyday ... Lucille ...at the age of 70+ ... goes to work at a low-paying job ...
She takes care of adults who can’t take care of themselves ... helping them “feel the love” ... helping them “feel whole” ... and, most of all, SPECIAL.

When Lucille looks at a person ... she doesn’t see the disability ... she sees the *a – bility*.
She sees the hope ... the personal dignity ... she sees Jesus and a “higher power” at work.
Lucille doesn’t worry about how many loaves there are. She just shares them ... and there is always enough to go around!!

Yesterday afternoon ... my phone rings. It’s Dennis Burke’s family he needs a visit. He hasn’t been at our church very long ... but ---- he needs us. He is in hospice care in his Tinley Park home.
Then a phone call from Gladys Gunnerson’s granddaughter. Gladys has been diagnosed with cancer ... at the age of 84. Oh, the passage of time. I think to myself ----- when I came here 35 years ago ... Gladys was only 49 years old. Now ---- Gladys is facing a whole new battle.
And Lucille? ... her funeral was yesterday.

Each one of them ... their cup is full ... it’s the way they lived their lives.
And you and me? ... we have loaves to share. Some of our loaves may be bigger than others. But together? ... we can feed the world!!
Besides ... Dennis, Gladys, and Lucille ... they need us ...and we need them!!

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