

Sermon: July 5, 2009
“Freedom & Muddy”

Of all the gifts we share ... FREEDOM is the most precious.
The freedom to dream ... to be the “very best” we can be ... going to school ... learning what we want ...
the freedom to work, to be part of a family, to worship ... to vote ...
the freedom to hike in the woods, to explore the country, to get up one day and decide to do something
“really different” ...
the freedom to find the very best doctors as we battle cancer ... to live with a disability, yet have the
opportunities to get the most out of life ...
the freedom to fail, and then to try again ... to make mistakes, and yet move on ...
the freedom to wonder and to wander ...
the freedom NOT to be defined by the color of our skin, or our IQ, or where we live, or by how much
or how little money we have ...
yes, the freedom to be defined by the CONTENT OF OUR CHARACTER ... by our heart,
our soul, our spirit ...

Our veterans ... our men and women in uniform ----- yes, your uniform and service and dedication
to the principals upon which our nation is founded ... you folks symbolize our deep spiritual hunger to be free.
You also remind us ----- FREEDOM IS A GIFT.
Our free will, our freedom to choose ---- it’s at the very foundation of what it means to be human.
You also remind us ----- often freedom involves pain.
The sacrifices, the blood shed, the hardships ... wounds that may never heal ...
losses that can never be re-paid.

Today is a reminder for all of us ...
*Each moment we live,
each day we are given,
every word we speak, every deed we choose to do ...*
is an opportunity for us to protect & nourish & celebrate & embrace *the dignity and worth and freedom
of our brothers and sisters in this world we share.*
Anything that gets in the way of this is simply WRONG.
There is no room for prejudice and hatred ... for jealousy and selfishness.
If we can only look at ourselves in the mirror ... and come to terms with who and what and where we are ...
if we can somehow accept our humanity for what it is ... if we can just walk in the shoes & sandals
of gentleness and kindness ...
THEN THERE WOULD NOT BE terrorists and extremists ... we wouldn’t have gangs and violence ...
we wouldn’t have misunderstandings and war.

Yes, there would be a new day ... a new feeling.
People wouldn’t be afraid to dream ... we would be able to enjoy and cherish the incredible joy and risk
of being free.

Many say we can judge the heart-and-soul of a person by the way he/she treats the creation and creatures with
whom we share this planet. Let’s face it ----- we share the planet with some amazing goofs!!
And ... we can learn from our animal friends: their loyalty, their innocence, their need to “roam free.”

Do you have a favorite animal story????

This morning I think of Muddy Lewis. A few years ago this humble-shaggy dog was hit by a car ... ended up in
an animal shelter ... where our daughter Layla found him and fell in love with him.

Layla adopted Muddy ... but when she moved back to Los Angeles ... he moved in with Jude and me and Q. Lewis is a “drifter.” He loved to roam ... and drift ... and roam some more especially at our humble farm-house in Crescent City. He was free to get dirty and wet ... no chains ... just the gift of freedom. He enjoyed farm equipment ... running behind or next to them as they drove down the road.

On Thursday morning ... Muddy chased his last tractor.
Jude and I and Q lay next to Muddy ... as he lay on our lawn next to the road.
As we saw him drift into the “next world” ... well, I began to doubt myself.
What if I had a chain for him?
What if we didn't let him run so free?
What if I had done this?... what if, what if, what if?????

MUDDY LEWIS WAS FREE!!

Free to be, free to roam.
A few years ago he was recued ... given a second chance ... he had new life ...
he wandered and explored.

Muddy's life and story teach me about today ... what July 4th and our country is all about.
When we are free to “wander” ... when we accept the invitation to be free ... well, it comes with no entitlements or guarantees. **THERE IS RISK.**
We have lots of unexpected twists and turns.
There are mistakes and failures along the way.
Every step we take ... every dream we dare to dream ... every moment we choose to live ----
yes, there is risk.
BUT ... THE RISK IS WORTH THE RIDE.

Life is our text-book.
From the birds of the air to the lilies of the field ...
from the fish of the sea to the dog who never leaves our side ...
from the aging World War II veteran, who journeys to the memorial in Washington, D.C. ---
for both his first and last time ...
to the people in our lives, who never give-up on us ...
to a gentle carpenter ... who years ago planted seeds of goodness --- giving us hope today ...

Yes, today is a day of goodness and grace.

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