

Sermon: May 24, 2009

**“The voice”**

Ever done something at the very spur of the moment ... just a “little something” ... and even tho’ it didn’t seem like a big deal at the time ... that “humble moment” changes your life or the life of someone else??

A couple years ago I went to visit someone. Ever done that? ... should I visit? ... should I call? ... what’s the point? I really didn’t know whom I was visiting.

Well ---- his wife is a good friend of one of our staff people.

His wife works at the same school as one of my buddies.

Anyway ---- this gentleman has cancer ... he is under hospice care at his home. So, a visit would be good.

I walk in the front door ... and the room is full of Italian Catholics.

I introduce myself to Bill ... he looks at me ----- “I know you.”

I look at him ---- “I know you, too.”

Basketball ... every Thursday night ... the local junior high.

Bill has a little twinkle in his eye ---- “Hey, you didn’t play basketball very reverend – like.”

“You weren’t exactly very spiritual on the b-ball court either, Bill.”

Fifteen minutes later ... we were all holding hands ... praying ... it was a good moment.

Bill died soon after that. But, in the aftermath of his death, something began to grow ----- a relationship with

Bill’s son: JASON.

Jason works here now.

He’s going to college in August.

He’s quiet ... he’s humble ... he doesn’t talk about himself.

For the past 2 years ... he’s been in charge of the “relay for life” at Sandburg ----- raising money for cancer research. This year ... Sandburg alone raised \$350,000!!

Thursday night we are worshipping out back. At the same time ... Sandburg is having its graduation on the football field next door. We can hear the music ... and some of the voices, too. Kind-of a nice connection!!

Just before our service ends ... I ask everyone to be quiet.

“Listen ...” I said ----- “you hear that voice across the field? ... it’s Jason. He is one of the 3 graduates chosen to speak during the ceremony ...” Then I go on and tell Jason’s story.

*“You may not recognize Jason’s voice ... and you may not have met him ...*

*But I want you to know this: each of you ... as a part of our church ... has had an incredible impact on Jason’s life. Jason misses his dad ... but ----- he’s found a couple father-figures around here.*

*And God knows if Jason will end-up going to church ... or if he could wind-up going to the DARK SIDE --- i.e., and become Lutheran.*

*But ----- Jason has the most important church of all: it’s a spirit, a feeling, a hunk-of-goodness tucked deep inside his soul ... grounded in a humble carpenter ... coming alive in a simple place on LaGrange Road.”*

This morning ... my heart is full.

I think of the family of John Patrick Callahan III. He died of a seizure on the day he was supposed to graduate from Marist High School. The president of Marist told the graduating class:

“This is the toughest exam you will ever take. And ---- please look around you ... look at each person, each face. Never take this or anyone for granted ... because you never know what tomorrow will bring.”

It’s amazing ...

When we are quiet ... when we take a moment to slow down ... and reflect about “stuff” ...

it’s amazing whose voice you might hear.

TOMORROW IS MEMORIAL DAY ... and I think of those words from the poem – the “Dash” ----

*“If we could just slow down enough ... to consider what’s true and real ...  
and always try to understand the way other people feel ...  
treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile ... remembering that this  
special dash only lasts a little while.”*

We have lots of opinions about war. Actually ---- nobody likes war ... soldiers don’t like war.  
But ... there is something about the uniform. When a man or woman walks into a room ... in uniform ...  
it just kind-of unites us and inspires us. When you represent our country in the military ----- you are not  
Republican or Democrat ... liberal or conservative ... you are an American.

So, this Memorial Day weekend ... slow down and listen to the voices ...  
\*\*the voice of a Vietnam vet. When they came home ... there was no parade. We ignored them ... often  
took our anger out on them. It took 20 years for us to have a parade ... through downtown Chicago ...  
sorry, veterans ... we let you down. I remember the parade ... led by a double amputee ... the voices of our  
soldiers ... the price they paid.

\*\*listen to the voice of a young man, who comes home from Iraq or Afghanistan ... only 23 years old ...  
he cannot walk ... his life will never be the same. Let us always make sure that people who fight for our  
country don’t have to come back and “fight” for their benefits.

\*\*listen to the voices of a young woman and her two kids ... whose husband and father is overseas ...  
and she has to apply for food-stamps because his military salary isn’t enough to pay the bills.  
This has to be changed.

All the varied battle fronts ----- Korea, the Persian Gulf, two world wars, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan ...  
yes, all the places where lives are at risk ... we hear the voices of men and women who have “answered  
the call.”

I can’t speak for you ... but this is all I want to do each day ----- *I want to answer “the call”* ...  
from my kids, to my friends, to my pets ... my church and my job ... the stranger down the block ...  
OUR CALL is to be decent ... to be kind ... to care ...

I can’t wait for next Thursday night.  
There will be no graduation.  
But the voices will be clearer than ever.

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