

Sermon: November 22, 2009

“Pleasing the world”

I’ve been thinking a lot about how “humbling” life can be.

Just look around. Think and pray and look into the eyes of those you love.

I’m praying for one of our police officers and his family today ... as he tries to deal with the unexpected death of his 20-year-old daughter. I walk up and down a nursing home hallway ... looking at all the folks lined up in the hallway ... sitting in their wheelchairs ... just waiting for someone to pay attention to them.

I think of how divided we are as a nation ... and the ridiculous games we play in the state of Illinois.

You know how it can be. Just when you think you have “all your ducks in a row” ... just when you think your life is in order ----- well, something comes along that just **KNOCKS YOU OFF YOUR FEET!!**

It may not be easy ... but sometimes humility is good.

It helps us connect with those who are struggling. It keeps us grounded.

Do you have “moments” in your life ... that kind-of “un-puff” you ... moments that keep you humble????

Maybe you own a business ... you’ve had the same customer for 25 years ... and then --- out of the blue --- your customer goes somewhere else. You wonder ... what did I do wrong?

It happens in families. You have a good relationship ... you talk ... you seem to enjoy each other ... and then suddenly ... this person drops off the face of the earth. Again, you wonder ---- what did I do???

The other day we have an event at church ... it’s fun ... lots of good spirit. We are winding down, cleaning-up, everyone is saying “good-bye” ... and this person --- whom I’ve known for years --- comes into my office:

“Don, just wanted you to know ----- we will be attending a different church starting next Sunday.”

Now ... in my younger years ... when I was more insecure than I am now ... I would have said the “politically correct” thing: *“Oh, I understand ... this is probably best for you ... maybe it’s part of God’s plan for you ...”*

Now that I’m older and crustier ... I just looked at her and proclaimed:

“What are you doing that for???????”

Later ... when I get home ... Jude asks me: “Don, is something wrong???”

I tell her about my encounter with who is now a former member. Jude smiles ... I smile back. We both realize I continue to suffer with what we call **DORIS BORLING DISEASE**.

My mom ... whose been gone a long time ... was the classic “*you gotta please everyone*” person.

Whether she hosted the “Dorcus circle” on Wednesday ... entertained the family over the holiday ... tried to mediate a conflict in the family ... trying to please an un-happy board member or an ex-spouse -----

SHE WANTED TO BE YOUR FRIEND!!

And there were times ... when “trying to please” would drive her to tears.

My first reaction ... when someone leaves the church ----- *it’s my fault ... I’ve done something wrong!!*

Like it says in the “good book” this morning there will be a time when each of us appears before the Lord in all his glory. All things will be fulfilled ... there is a day of “reckoning” --- whatever that means.

In the meantime ----- **WE ARE HERE** ... on this journey called **EARTH** ... a journey both majestic and humbling.

And if there is one thing my mama has taught me ... even in her death ...

if there is one thing the good Lord and his carpenter-son have taught us ...

WE ARE CALLED TO LIVE ... EACH DAY ... IN A SPIRIT OF GRACE AND TRUTH ...

We are called to live in this “imperfect kingdom” ... with courage and goodness in our hearts ...

BUT ... we cannot ever ... BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE.

There is no way we can please everyone ... we can’t be everyone’s friend!!

All we can be ----- *is true to our own HEART-SONG.*

I love Thanksgiving --- the smells, the traditions, the history.

For some of us ... THANKSGIVING can be hard. Maybe our family isn't what we'd like it to be. Maybe it's the first big holiday without that person whom you've loved for so many years. Often-time ... holidays spark a kind-of inner loneliness paralyzing you and tempting you to withdraw.

I think of my dad. How he taught me ... without having to utter a word:

giving is a way of life.

You may have nothing ... but, if you give from your guts, from the very depth of your being ... then you have everything.

You may be poor ...

but ---- when your heart tingles as you walk by the Salvation Army bucket ... or if you are the kind of person who is generous to the person who throws your morning paper onto your driveway ... when you don't judge someone just because you think she is too young for a tattoo ...
yes: YOU CAN BE THE RICHEST PERSON IN THE WORLD.

The Thanksgiving table is like the Lord's table:

no rich or poor,
no gay or straight,
no slave or free,

no pre-conditions or post-conditions ...

just YOU, GOD'S CHILD ... and those you love.

Life can be humbling ... but it's never without a God who loves us.

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