

Sermon: October 4, 2009

“Shoes”

We never worship here in a vacuum. Each of you brings your story into this humble room ... whatever you are going through, whatever you are thinking ... and I wonder: *does what we talk about here on Sunday make a difference in what you do during the week???*

*It was Derrion’s funeral yesterday. I think of his horrible death ... in a mob-scene outside his high school.

*Yesterday ... 8 American soldiers were killed, not far from a mosque in Afghanistan.

* I had a wedding here yesterday ... and just as she was leaving her home to come to the wedding ... the mother-of-the-groom had a stroke. So, as the wedding went on ... everyone was worried about her journey to the hospital. We found out afterwards ----- she is in very critical condition. The varied emotions inside this sanctuary yesterday were deep and incredible.

*Rosalie Turner ... she has been sitting right over there ... every Sunday at 8:30, for 30 years.

I married her daughter Janet and husband here just 3 months ago. The other night ... he was killed in a car accident. They were so happy ... so connected ... but their love story ended way too soon.

YES ----WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER. On Sunday mornings our varied journeys meet in here.
And we try our best to hold each other up.

I think of the Olympics. It seems like they have lost a bit of their “luster.” The Olympic ideal is so noble ... but money and politics and “bad blood” between organizations have gnawed-away at the purity of what the games are supposed to mean. I keep wondering: *IS ANYTHING PURE ANYMORE???*

The gospel lesson for today is no help. We have this beautiful scene with Jesus, and the kids sitting on his lap. Jesus talks about “receiving the kingdom as a little child.” But just before this ... there is this crazy dialogue about divorce basically accusing those going through divorce of adultery. This is why we have Bible study ... because, in a million years, you could never convince me that Jesus even came close to uttering these words. **THE CHURCH ... THE KINGDOM ... A JESUS-CENTERED COMMUNITY** ----- we are a welcoming place, an accepting and forgiving place. Reading stuff like this ... with no explanation ... just drives people away.

There are some things in life that are pure ... I was reminded of it yesterday. Our son Jeremy’s wife – Audrey – started a cross-country team at her Chicago inner city school. Ever been to a city cross-country meet???? When you think cross-country ... you usually think of forest preserves, with quiet paths going around ponds. Last year Jude and I went to their first meet ... in a city park. We noticed the shoes many of the kid were wearing ----- broken-down basketball shoes, shoes without laces, some kids even running in street shoes. Jude and I look at each other ... “these kids need shoes.”

We talked to Audrey and Jeremy.

I talked to my dad ... even tho’ he’s been dead for 6 years.

I thought of this incredible church on LaGrange Road ... with the never-ending “love bucket.”

I went to their meet yesterday ... running in the park ... along the lake ... at 39th St. and Lake Shore Drive.

The kids have shoes. They look good. Their thank-you note and photograph are in the narthex.

So, I’m sitting on a rock, watching the kids run. An older guy comes by ... sits next to me ... takes a sketch pad out of this worn backpack. He introduces himself ... his name is Don ... how nice!@!! ----- *and suddenly I feel a “sermon” coming on!!* I talk about my artist wife. He asks how I feel about the Olympics. I look over the lake ... it’s a gorgeous greenish-blue ... I see the city sky-line ... I see the diverse people in the park ... and

I wonder ----- it would have been “fun” having the Olympics here.

A jolly big guy comes by ... offering us a cup of coffee. Parents and visitors smile and nod.

I look at the clouds and the sun ... I feel the breeze ... we talk to “strangers” ... and I realize:

peace is not all that difficult!!

*When you follow the winds of your spirit,
when you look into your neighbor's eyes,
when you share a cup of coffee & choose to take the "high road" in life,
when you listen to another person's story ... instead of always talking about yourself ...
when you open your heart and your soul to the world around you ----*

***THEN WE DISCOVER: PEACE is not just a prayer request ...
it's not a pipe dream ... it's not a political statement ...
PEACE IS A GIFT ... IT'S A WAY OF LIFE.***

Jesus was a man of peace.
He exuded peace.
He shared peace with every person he met.
And ... he gives that peace back to us ----- every minute of every day.
AND OUR JOB????? ... as a church, as friends, as family ----- *is now to carry that
"torch of peace."*

There is way too much tension in the world.
Sure ---- we can't change Afghanistan. We can't turn terrorists into social workers.
We certainly can't change the world overnight.
But ----- I can listen to my "heart-song."

I'm discovering more and more "THE OLYMPICS" is a spirit.
**The "Olympics" is an inner city kid running her first race.*
**It's going to re-hab ... vowing to yourself YOU WILL WALK AGAIN.*
**It's the doctor saying you have a 20% chance of surviving this cancer ... and you say:
"I'll take it!!" ... and you never give-up ... and you never give-in.*
**It's going to work everyday ... year after year ... and giving your little station on the factory-line
your very-very best.*
**It's the courage to start your own business when nobody wants to hire you.*
**It's being un-employed, but never giving-up on yourself.*
**It's all these little kids up here for the "Fred-sermon" and giving them the freedom
to dream ... to be an athlete, musician, teacher, mechanic ... wherever their heart leads them.*
**And ... it's never being too old to dream!!*

Sure ... we "lost" the Olympics ... and maybe it's just as well.
But ... please ... let us never **lose the spirit.**
The spirit is here ... embedded in the heart-and-soul of each of us.

It's time to let it out.
It's time to restore it: *one kid, one person, one moment at a time!!*

Don Borling
All Saints Lutheran Church
13350 LaGrange Road
Orland Park, IL 60462
October 4, 2009