

Sermon: April 18, 2010

“The wind-up pastor”

I have become ... over the years ... “a man of routines.” I’m sure some of my “routines” drive you nuts ... as they do my family!@!! My dad was a “man of routines” ...and I swore ---- that ain’t gonna happen to me!!

Well ... as my kids are quick to remind me ----- I have “become my father.”

There is SAFETY in routines.

Our youth group just got back from their weekend retreat. For 35 years ... we have shared Communion in this old broken-down milk barn. We sit there ... and the ghosts and spirits of the past speak to us.

I remember, as a kid, waking up in the morning ... looking out the window ... and I could see my dad’s tire-tracks in the snow ...as he left for work at 6:15 AM. Then ... at 6:15 PM ... he would come back --- everyday.

Made me feel safe and secure.

Kids love routines ... from their bowl of cereal in the morning, your mom getting you on the bus, the dog “goosing” you before you go to bed ----- it all makes you feel loved and safe.

I think of all my wife Jude has been through over the past couple weeks. My job is pretty basic: love her with all my heart and keep Quinton’s life as normal and as routine as possible!!

My favorite routine was my Sunday night phone call to my dad. 7:37 PM ... front porch ... brandy in hand.

“Hi, dad.”

“Good evening, Reverend ... how was the sermon this morning?” Oh, pretty mediocre.

“Layman ... how were things in your church this morning?”

Oh, Pastor Dan was his usual dull and wordy self!!

“And ... how is Aunt Mildred.”

I could just see my dad smile ----- As usual ... Mildred is enjoying poor health!@!!

“Hey, dad ... brandy always tastes better when I’m talking to you ... I LOVE YOU.”

My dad responds ---- “you, too.” Swedish men.....they can’t say “I love you” ... but they can say: “you, too.”
The safety and security and the love in “life’s routines.”

I was at a reception the other day for one of the employees at Colonial Chapel ... he just retired.

Kenny is the guy who always greets you in the funeral home parking lot ... gives you a sticker ... then shows you where to park. I toasted Kenny:

“You are always the face of the funeral home ... the welcoming face ... making you feel at home at what can be a very difficult time.”

A bit later on ... one of the directors got up ... and toasted me or, should I say ---- “roasted me.”

“We’re trying to cut back on expenses ... so, one thing we’re gonna do is buy a WIND-UP PASTOR DON DOLL.”

When a family doesn’t have a church or pastor ... instead of paying Don to show up ... we’ll just wind up the doll. You know the drill ----- Ecclesiastes 3, Psalm 23 ... the song “Here I am, Lord” ... a meditation where Don talks about his walk “out back of the church” ... talking to his mom ... he can still smell his grandparents’ furniture ... reading the poem “the Dash” ... followed by the benediction ... ”

Pretty sad when the local funeral director knows your routines!@!!

We all know what it’s like when our routines are interrupted. There are the small things ----- flat tires, dead batteries, a bout with the flu, the little league game goes into extra innings.

Then there are the LIFE-CHANGING INTERRUPTIONS:

**The guy you used to call on Sunday nights ... he’s no longer with us.

**You hear that “word” from your doctor, and you know your life will never be the same again ---- alzheimer’s, cancer, ms, lupas ...

**The job that’s been your “life-line” ... it’s no longer there. The bills you paid so easily ... now your check-book can’t cover them ...

**Your kid is sick, your friend moves away ... you’ve never been “depressed” before ...

THE ROUTINES that brought you such comfort ... they have escaped you.

What does the prophet Isaiah say???

**The Lord strengthens those who are weak and tired. Even the young can grow weak and feel exhausted.
But those who trust in the Lord will find their strength renewed.
They who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength ... they shall mount up with wings as eagles.
They shall run and not be weary ... they shall walk and not faint ...
teach me, Lord ... teach me, Lord ----- to wait.**

Old words ... so true today.

I don't believe for a minute that God pre-ordains our journey ...
I don't believe for a minute that God causes certain things to happen ...
God does not "test us" and play games with us ...
LIFE TESTS US ... EVERYDAY.

When things are going well ... then we are called to share ... to give ... to reach-out to those who need a bit
of hope and rainbows.

Too often ----- we "keep to ourselves" and don't look beyond our own world.
Yes ----- life "tests us" to think beyond our world ... to the world of those in need.
And certainly ... when life "hits the skids" ... yes, we are tested. When we swear we don't have the strength to
face another day ----- we need to hear the prophets' voice ... reminding us:

THE LORD NEVER ABANDONS US.
HE WALKS WITH US ... HE CRIES WITH US ... HE HURTS WITH US.
Always ---- the Lord is here.

In the gospel we hear these words: "In my father's house are many mansions ..."
So true.

Each of us is unique. We have good times and bad times.
We have moments of faith ... times of doubt.

We are Christian and Jewish and Lutheran and Catholic and Baptist often we don't know what or who
we are & we can be confused.

Let's quit judging and fighting and pretending we have all the answers.
"Salvation" is no one's prerogative ... it's a gift ... it's an invitation ...
Let's enjoy it.

Let's take what life gives us ----- one step & one day at a time.

Don Borling
All Saints Lutheran Church
13350 LaGrange Road
Orland Park, IL 60462
www.allsaintsjoy.com allsaintsjoy@sbcglobal.net 708-448-2939