

Sermon: August 1, 2010

**“All is vanity???”**

The Bible is an interesting book. In fact ... it's fascinating.  
Some would say the “Bible is the Word of God.” Well ... what does this mean?  
Did God write the Bible? Did he tell some special people what to write???

Let's face it ----- there is some “stuff” in the Bible making absolutely no sense. Like the killings and wars ... being God's handiwork. Some of the rules.

My guess is ... when you hear some of the lessons read on Sunday morning ... you wonder:  
“who are the meatballs who decide what to read and what not to read???”

Then there are the biblical words ... almost heaven-sent!! They feel like music and poetry.

*For everything there is a season ...  
The Lord is my shepherd ... my soul magnifies the Lord ...  
Love is patient and kind.  
AND ALL THE JESUS STORIES ...the healings, the touches ...  
My peace I give to you ... my peace I leave with you ...*

Then we get to a passage like the first lesson for today ----- “Vanity of vanities ... ALL IS VANITY.”

*God is the one who gives us all this unhappy business.  
I hate my toil ... it's like chasing after the wind.  
I spend my whole life working ... and then leave it to people who didn't do anything.  
What do we get for all our toil under the sun????? ---- absolutely nothing.  
Our days are full of pain ... they are worth nothing.*

Whoever said this ... sure would be fun to be around!@!???

This is NOT God's word ..... basically, these are words of HUMAN FRUSTRATION.

This is precisely what makes the Bible so real ----- it's about our journey ... our experience ... how we feel about God. It's about faith ... and doubt ... and being just plain HUMAN!!

GOD'S WORD ----- well, it's pure ... it's all about love & goodness & peace.

But his “word” ----- it comes to us in our rather messy-and-imperfect world.

*\*We have people beating the crud out of each other ---- everyday.*

*\*We have religions and churches and preachers ----- who are clueless when it comes to knowing who Jesus really is.*

*\*Families fight over money.*

*\*Everyday ...we gotta “slug it out” in order to survive.*

*\*Many of you battle addictions ... some of you work two jobs, and still struggle to pay the bills.*

I'm sure there are times when you feel like life and all your toil are for nothing:

**VANITY OF VANITY ... ALL IS VANITY!!**

There is a coach at a small college not too far from here. Over the past 10 years ... I've been privileged to know him. He often calls me his “spiritual coach” .... even tho' I've fallen short of this title since our son Jeremy has been through with college. Cross-county runners don't get any money to compete here ... they do it out of love

and commitment. This coach's gift? ----- taking men and women with “ordinary ability” ... and turning them into a TEAM.

He often tells his students:

*You can believe anything you want ... but ----- it's what you KNOW INSIDE YOUR SOUL that makes you who you are.*

Sure ... we can say we “believe” in Jesus ...  
We can say we “believe” in freedom and what our country stands for ...  
We can claim to “believe” everyone has dignity and we “are created equal” ...  
We can “believe” in sportsmanship and love ...

But this doesn't amount to a “hill of beans” if it doesn't come alive in the way we live.  
Sure ---- say you “believe” in Jesus ... but ... **DO YOU EMBODY HIS SPIRIT????**  
Is his spirit in your spirit??

When you go to work ... when you visit your dad ... when your kid calls late at night because he has  
screwed-up ... when your dream doesn't pan-out ... when your best buddy fails you ... in this thing called  
”our daily journey” ----- **DO WE WALK IN JESUS' SANDALS???**

I was thinking back on our week at confirmation camp.  
We had a small informal Communion service.

One of the kids comes up to the table to receive the gifts of bread and wine ... and after he receives the gifts ...  
well, he stays at the altar. Other kids come up and go back to their seats ... but Bradley stays at the altar.

Afterwards Bradley comes up to me.

“Pastor Don ... are you wondering why I stayed at the altar for so long???”  
Not really ... well, maybe ----- **OK, WHY WERE YOU THERE SO LONG????**

“Well ...” he talks slowly ... “*The Communion rail ... it's really the only place where I feel normal & accepted.*”

*When I receive Communion ...*

*I'm not DIFFERENT,*

*I'm not A-D-D ...*

*I don't eat alone in the cafeteria ... no one makes fun of me ...*

*I'm just myself!!”*

I give him a hug. I understand.

There is a lot to “taste” out there in the world.

There's a lot to see.

Some good. Some not so good.

There is the “Taste of Chicago.” We even have the Taste of Palos and the Taste of Orland Park.

Bradley went to the most important “taste” of all:

***THE TASTE OF GOODNESS.***

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