

Sermon: May 16, 2010

“The fish”

Life has such power. Often it's the “little things” we see and face each day that remind us how sacred life is.

It's amazing to me ... how many people out there just don't seem to care about the miracle of life.

They don't see the power ... the beauty ... the miracle of every living-breathing cell.

*It is tempting “to look the other way” when disaster strikes ... and 1,000's of people lose their lives in a moment of time.

*Doesn't it just break your heart ... when a young girl is innocently playing in her front yard ... and some thug fires a shot in a drive-by ... and suddenly her life is gone???

*Doesn't it just break your heart ... when a young child is made fun-of ----- for being different, for having a disability, for being over-weight ... and you just see the pain in his/her eyes????

WHAT WE STAND FOR HERE ----- is the sanctity of life ... and the dignity of all people.
We share this journey ... every step of the way ... and no one should be a “stranger” in God's kingdom.

I shared a crazy moment the other day ... reminding me how precious all of life is.

We have a small pond in the backyard ... it's been the home of our one remaining gold-fish for 12 years. He's in there year-round. Every winter Jude puts a heater into the pond ... so our fish can survive. I keep thinking ---- he is old ... and he won't be around much longer. I always check on him in the morning ... and feed him. For some reason ... I go out there on Tuesday afternoon ----- *the pond is empty ... our fish is lying on the bottom ... not moving.*

I run into the kitchen to share the sad news with Jude and Q. Q cries.

I'm getting tears in my eyes. I go back to the pond.

I get the hose ... and I begin running the water directly onto our fish.

He starts to twitch ... he is moving ... I'm getting goose-bumps ... “THIS LITTLE SUCKER IS COMING BACK TO LIFE!@!!” He gives me a look ... as if to say: “What the heck took you so long!@!!”

I fill the pond ... the fish slowly begins to swim:

“Jude ... Q ... please come out ----- YOU GOTTA SEE THIS!!!”

My gosh ... it's only a fish!! ... but symbolically ---- more than a fish. A reminder of life and its sacredness.

*If I care this much about a fish ... what about the lonely gentleman in room 321 at Manor Care?

*If I get this emotional about one little aging animal ... what about the young child with AIDS in Africa??

*The kid with no friends at the local elementary school?

*The neighbor down-the-block whom nobody talks to?

*Irene's brother, as he awaits a kidney transplant?

*The couple who wants to get married ... but is afraid to ask the minister because they don't have much money?

THE SACREDNESS OF LIFE SURROUNDS US.

From trees, to tulips, to goldfish ... the cries of little kids, a friend battling cancer, an unexpected act of kindness thrown our way ... an animal shelter full of creatures who need a home.

Yes, life can be complicated. It's unpredictable, sometimes cruel, occasionally majestic.

But --- LIFE IS LIFE. We cherish it ... we fight for it ... we sometimes take it for granted.

Every “soul” is God's child. Some go astray ... some inspire us to be more than we ever thought possible.

I must admit ----- this whole church & religion thing puzzles me.

In many ways ... the church/religion ... well, we are nuts. We try to be “all things to all people” ... we want people to “come through the door” and hopefully stay. Well ... some stay, some don't.

We have rules ---- for membership, receiving Communion, who can be baptized. We have choirs and youth groups and Sunday School and seniors ... clergy with fancy robes and deacons ...

Some people feel “in” ... others feel shut-out ...
Churches are human ...just like life.

But ----- there is really only one reason for us to be here ... and *it's all about LOVE.*
Churches ... religions ... are different: Lutheran, Catholic, Baptist ...Christian cathedrals, Jewish temples,
Mosques and Assembly halls.

Well ---- it's time to re-discover the very essence of who we are.
What is it that drives us and motivates us?????

In the gospel for today ... Jesus is about ready to leave this earth.
He is praying to God --- his FATHER.
Prayer is about life. It's not about words ... it's not about saying the “right thing” ... it's simply believing:
there is a “higher power” who listens to us and sustains us.

Jesus prays:

*Father, the world doesn't know you. That's why I am here ----- that through me, they may know the power and
depth of your love. I want my followers to know: my love ... it lives in them.*

My friends ---- God's love is “in here.” It lives inside each one of us.
Jesus didn't come to build buildings and create churches and temples. He doesn't want monuments and barriers
between us. HE CAME ----- that we might discover and know the power, joy, and beauty of
God's love.

I often feel like my fish: a little fish, in a big pond. No more water. Nowhere to turn.
Then ... unexpectedly ... someone turns on a switch.
I look into someone's eyes ... and I see the MIRACLE OF THE MOMENT. Because someone
cares enough to be kind and reach-out.
I am reminded again of what life is all about ... and once again I know:
*Life can push us to the limit ... but LOVE -----
it is the most powerful force in the world.*

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