

Sermon: May 23, 2010
“Leave your fair share”

Are you as “stunned” as I am ... by the variety and breath of the human spirit?

On the one hand ... some people can be ... how can I say this nicely????? ---- some people are just plain CHEAP!@!! It has nothing to do with how much money you have or don't have ... it's really a way of looking at the world.

There's a guy I'm thinking about ... he's no longer here but he used to hang-out here a lot.

He would love “to do lunch.”

“Hey, Rev ... I'll take you to lunch.”

I realized ... that “taking me to lunch” didn't mean “paying for lunch.”

He would always encourage me to order off the “luncheon specials” part of the menu then, when the check came ... he would just sit there and look at it. So, eventually ... I just picked it up.

“Oh, Rev ... I was going to take care of it.”

“Right, my friend ... and Jesus is coming back tomorrow, too!!”

For some people ... well, life is “all about them” ... “what's in it for me.”

Then there are those for whom “GIVING” just oozes from the very pores of their being. Giving isn't something special ... it's just part of who they are.

I'm thinking a bit about ROSELAND this morning. I think of the police officer ---- Tom Wortham --- who was murdered the other day. He serves two tours of duty in Iraq ... and then is murdered in front of his parents' home in Chicago. He grew up in Roseland ... loved his life there.

Instead of being one of the most violent part of Chicago ... I remember Roseland, as a kid, being the PROMISED LAND. My grandparents lived there ... stick-ball in the streets ... basketball all day on the playground ... front porches full of love and neighbors. My grandpa mowing his lawn ... about the size of my office. He had one of those mowers without the motor ----- it really didn't cut the grass ... it just kind-of bent the grass for a few days ... then it popped back up ... and he would mow it again.

I would run out the front door early in the morning ... and wouldn't return 'til super time.

My grandparents were rich ... I mean RICH!!

Bamboo fishing poles ... big pots of coffee going all day. They gave me quarters. At the age of 55 ... my grandpa learned to drive and bought a used car. Every Sunday he put money into the collection plate at church. Until my grandparents died ... I didn't know the truth ----- they had very little money ... almost broke.

ALL THEY DID WAS GIVE.

Whatever they had ... they shared.

It's so tempting to measure our lives on the basis of HOW MUCH WE HAVE OR DON'T HAVE. What we do for a living ... what we accomplish ---- these become the barometers of what we are worth.

Life ... really ... is ABOUT OUR SPIRIT.

This is Pentecost Sunday. Jesus had been gone for 50 days ... and there was so much confusion: is he coming back? ... when? ... where??

Finally his followers realized ----- HE IS NOT COMING BACK ... HE IS ALREADY HERE!!

Yes, he is here ... but it's different.

Like the disciples ... I long for things “to be the way they were.”

Sure ... it would be great if Jesus came back and walked the earth like before ... but it's not in the cards.

I would love for my mom to come back ... my dad.

I'd love to skip again on my grandparents' lawn in Roseland ... and bring back the simplicity and joy of those years.

WELL ----- THE TORCH HAS BEEN PASSED ... to you and me.

Jesus lives ... his spirit lives ... and it lives inside each one of us.

Now ... what are we going to do to keep it alive!????

Panera Bread Company is opening a new store in Clayton, Missouri.
There will be no prices on the menu items ... customers are asked to give what they can.
Can you imagine?????

THEY HAVE A MOTTO ---- HANGING ON THE WALL:

***TAKE WHAT YOU NEED.
LEAVE YOUR FAIR SHARE.***

Isn't this precisely what we stand for here???

Everything in this church ----- borrowing tables, using our fellowship room, coffee on a Tuesday morning,
an average sermon on Sunday, Sunday School classes and love-buckets, reaching-out and reaching-in ...

TAKE WHAT YOU NEED TAKE IT ALL ... WE ALL NEED SOMETHING ...

We all need hope ... we need help often more than we ever thought we needed ...

So, my friends ... in life ... TAKE WHAT YOU NEED ... LEAVE BEHIND YOUR FAIR SHARE.

Jude and I talk a lot about this ----- life-changing "events" ... the "times" in our lives that really make us
look at who we are and what we have.

I'm not just talking about "bad things" happening to us ... it's also about the good things ...
the unexpected "alleluia" moments ...

Jude has two sisters ... they are wonderful. Jude and her sisters will do anything for each other.

Especially now ... as Jude battles cancer ... they are telling her:

JUDE ... YOU GOTTA BACK OFF ... NOT SO MUCH CHURCH STUFF ...
THINK MORE ABOUT YOURSELF!!

Jude's response????

In tough times ... it's tempting to pull-back.

It's easy to stop being "who you are meant to be."

Alzheimer's can take away much of your memory ... cancer can take away your hair and lots of your time ...
losing a child can take away that skip in your step ... losing your job can cost you money ...

BUT ALL THIS STUFF *does not have to take away your dignity and who you are as God's child.*

In the midst of all we go through ... I am who I am ... I will always "be me"!!

Like the prophet says in the Pentecost lesson today:

*"I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh ... your sons and daughter will prophesy ...
young men and women will see visions ...
old men will dream dreams ..."*

From bamboo fishing poles ... to an un-cut lawn in Roseland ...

a love bucket ... a menu with no numbers ...

an act of kindness with no note attached ...

YES: TAKE WHAT YOU NEED ... LEAVE YOUR FAIR SHARE.

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