

Sermon: November 28, 2010
“Routines, the big buck ... and comfort”

I drive my over-used pick-up truck into a dark parking lot ... early this morning.
I see the Christmas lights above the front door ... the spot-light on the manger scene ... it never gets old.
A reminder Christmas is near.
I get out of my truck, turn around ... and there is this big BUCK standing right in the middle of the parking lot.
Antlers gracing the sky.
I say to him: “*Rudolph ----- it’s only the first Sunday in Advent ... RELAX!!*”

I go inside ... make the coffee ... get all the lights turned on ... and the phone rings ... it’s Jude:
“*Don ... go to the front door ... look at the SUNRISE!!*”
Big buck in the parking lot ... an artist’s sunrise ----- hey, it’s barely 6:00 am, and my day has peaked!!

I don’t know if it’s a sign of getting older and wiser ... or maybe I’m just plain BORING!!
Now ... I know routines can be “boring” ----- an excuse for not trying something new.
But there are some routines ... in which I find such comfort and joy.
**I never get tired of turning the key in the front door of the church in the morning ...
and making a pot of strong coffee.
**I never grow weary of coffee or a cocktail with Jude at the kitchen table.
**As you are painfully aware ... I never get tired of singing “Alleluia” on a Thursday night ...
or “Here I am, Lord” on Sunday morning.
**Or walking down the “airplane aisle” with Q in a toy store. It’s not good for my financial health ...
but it’s soul for the spirit!!

There is so much in life changing all around us. There is so much that can scare us.
Getting laid-off ... this violent nonsense between North and South Korea ... your loved-one getting sick ...
an accident changing your life forever ... the growing disrespect for authority and decency ...
Yes ---- in a moment of time, our lives can change. So, in the midst of all this -----
WE NEED PLACES AND TIMES AND SPACES ... where we can go ... where we can return to ...
keeping us grounded and safe and accepted.

This place is one of them!!
True ... it’s only a building. If we disappeared tomorrow ... well, our lives would be different ... but the world
would hardly notice. Yes ----- the preaching is marginal, and the coffee too strong.
Yet ... in a world of changes and risky turns ... in a world of uncertainty and heroes who often disappoint us ...
*here we are grounded in a humble carpenter ----- who calls us to a faith of simplicity, certainty, and
un-ending goodness.*

Advent is a season of EXPECTATION. The gospel lesson for today talks about “getting ready” ... because
you just never know when the “Son of man” will come ----- so, keep your eyes open!!
Now --- many churches and preachers turn passages like this into scare tactics ----- you better
“accept Jesus” now ... believe this now ... or you will never make it into heaven!@!!

They miss the whole point.
Jesus is back. He returns everyday.
Jesus lives in the “moments of life” ... he lives in our thoughts, words, deeds, and routines.
We can choose to be the kind-of “stump” who only cares about himself. We can be the “stump” who is afraid
to give ----- for fear there won’t be enough left for ourselves. We can be the kind-of “stump” who says and
believes all the right things but doesn’t have the guts to put one’s faith into practice.

OR ----- we can give and share from the very “guts” of who we are ... and be the kind-of “stump” who allows the light of Jesus to shine in the kind of person we choose to be.

It’s been happening for some 20 years ... Zack and Josh we just babies!!

It’s the Saturday before Advent. A pick-up truck rolls in ... with 3 trees in the back.

THE BIG ONE goes in Charter Hall. The “medium one” is in here. The “little one” just outside the gym.

Bob Buikema and “company” cut-off the stumps ... they haul the big trees into the building ... with the “legendary BIG BIRD” leading the way.

It’s 9:30 am ... by 10:30 am ----- everything is up and running.

The guys are sitting around ... I look at Big Bird ----- now: BIG BIRD IS A BIG GUY!@!!

“Hey, how about a beer?”

Big Bird smiles: “A beer in church ... before noon ... on a Saturday morning ...

hey, Rev ... how do I become a member?????”

(I’ve been waiting 20 years ... he still hasn’t joined!@!!)

It’s 10:30 am yesterday. Same guys. Josh and Zack are men now. The beer is still cold. Big Bird still smiles.

Bob Buikema and I look at each other. Is it ok for a couple of aging guys to get a bit “misty”

this time of the year?????

Bob’s words are firm, but gentle:

“You know, Don????? ... these guys look forward to this day every year ... they almost fight over who gets to come. The routine means the world to them!@!”

Bob and his family ----- their journey this year has been all over the map.

My family ----- this has been a year I will never forget!!

Bob reflects a little more:

“Don, I’ll never take this for granted. You just never know, in life ---- when it may be the last time.

This moment is special ... it really is ... ”

An ordinary routine. An ordinary day. Ordinary guys.

It’s in the middle of times like this that a humble carpenter with sandals lives.

The moments.

A reindeer.

The sunrise.

A non-church go-er and “saint” named Big Bird.

A routine.

I guess ...when it comes to God’s spirit ----- nothing is routine.

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November 28, 2010

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