

Sermon: August 7, 2011  
"Playgrounds and dreams"

There is a lot I like about "getting older" ...

But ... one of the things I miss the most ... as a couple of my joints are not plastic and titanium ...

I miss going to the playground, with a bright-shiny-new-basketball in my hands.

I did this until I was well over 50. When you go to the park with a nice ball ... you have a better chance of being invited into a game ----- especially when you are "older." Nothing like a game of pick-up basketball at the local park. The energy ... the spontaneity ...

I remember visiting my grandparents in Roseland. Going to the local school playground ... using chalk to make a big square on the side of the building ----- this was the STRIKE-ZONE ...

It would only take one other kid to show up ... playing stick-ball all day long.

At home in Glen Ellyn. Getting my balloon-tire bike out of the garage ... filling my baskets with a b-ball, bat, glove, and swim suit. By 9:00 in the morning I was gone ... and my mom would yell from the front door:

"Make sure you are home for supper!@!!" ---- all day long at the park ... a safe-haven for kids ...

Wednesday ... 5:20 PM ... Darius Brown is playing basketball at the local park ----- 42<sup>nd</sup> and State Street.

Everyday ... with his buddies and brothers.

Playgrounds are "fields of dreams" for so many kids.

You dream one day of playing in front of 1000's of people. You dream of being like your hero --- D. Rose.

You dream of people being so proud of you.

You dream of getting out of a gang-filled neighborhood ... and other reminders of a "drug war" that has failed at every turn.

You no longer want your mom to be afraid, every time you walk out the door.

At 5:20 PM ... Wednesday ... Darius was shot. He died.

I mention Darius ---- not because his death is any more tragic than the countless other innocent victims.

But ... Darius is a symbol of the pain, violence, and lack of peace infecting so much of life today.

I STILL LIKE TO DREAM.

Certainly ... my dreams, like many of yours, are tempered by reality ... my dreams have certainly "calmed-down" a bit over time.

But ... when we stop dreaming ... when we are afraid to dream ... we lose so much of our humanity.

In the gospel for today ... the disciples are in a boat ----- battered by the storms around them.

Speaking of storms ...

\*2 months of 100+ temperatures ...

\*30 soldiers ... whose dream is one day to be instruments of peace ... their helicopter is shot down ... they have paid the ultimate price for serving our country ...

\*People like you are me are more nervous than ever ... about working, and providing for our families ...

\*Not to mention the individual struggles you face in private every day ...

Many say ---- why dream? ... what's the point???

Jesus walks towards the boat ... Peter wants to join him ... walking on the water ... but as soon as the wind blows ---- Peter starts to sink.

Why?

Because he doubts himself ...

He doubts the power of Jesus ...  
He doubts the very fabric of life itself ...

I doubt, too.

When you dare to dream ... you will doubt.

When you live life with passion ... you will doubt.

When you care ... when you believe in the power of love ... when you believe God is good ...  
when you believe faith & religion make a difference ... when you believe you can "walk on water" ...

YOU WILL DOUBT.

In many ways ... it's almost "easier" not to care.

It's easy to throw our hands up ... and say ---- it really doesn't make a difference.

We try to protect ourselves ---- not just from our own pain ... but from the pain of others.

You know? .... I wouldn't trade CARING AND LOVE for anything.

Yes, it can hurt.

Yes, it can be rough.

But ---- caring and loving and believing ... it makes us who we are.

I DREAM THIS CHURCH WILL ALWAYS BE HERE.

I DREAM MY KIDS AND GRANDKIDS WILL ALWAYS BELIEVE IN WHO AND WHAT THEY ARE.

I DREAM ONE DAY I WILL SEE MY MOM AND DAD IN HEAVEN.

We have two young kids in our church ... dreaming their dad will recover from his stroke.

We have parents and grandparents ... dreaming young Connor will beat cancer.

This afternoon ... Darius' buddies are playing ball ... trying to fulfill their dreams.

Navy Seals will continue to train and battle ... dreaming of living a world of peace and goodness.

DREAMING IS OUR FUEL.

DREAMING IS OUR ENGINE.

They don't always come true ... but the freedom to dream is worth fighting for.

And, Darius ... I trust there is basketball in heaven.

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