

Sermon: January 30, 2011

“His journey ...”

I knew this Sunday would be different.

I live with a lady who enriches my life everyday. Jude loves me, as I love her. She loves me for who and what I am ... and pretty much lets me do “my thing.”

On Wednesday she says to me as I walk out the door ----- “Don, you have something to do today.”

“What might that be???”

“Don ---- it’s 50 years Sunday ... you need to buy some SLACKS!!”

Slacks? ... ok ---- I’ll stop by Kohl’s. No, Don ... not Kohl’s ----- Men’s Warehouse.

Oh, dear. I remember my first visit to Men’s Warehouse ----- a good 15+ years ago ... when our guest speaker for today’s banquet asked me to pray before Congress. But, Don ---- you gotta wear a suit. Jude took me to Men’s Warehouse ... and \$800 later, I walked out the door. Not as bad this time ... and ---- I am wearing “slacks.”

History can be fun. It’s all about people and stories. Moments. Successes and failures. Everything in-between.

As we gather in the peace and freedom of this place ... I think of the people of Egypt.

God --- I hate violence. Physical, spiritual, religious, emotional ----- there’s all kind of violence out there.

I can’t imagine our freedom being snatched-away.

And the Middle East ---- it’s holy ground. It’s where Jesus walked.

This is holy ground, too. Whether you have been here 50 years or 50 days ----- this is where we laugh, cry, share a baptism, have a wedding ... there’s funerals, breakfasts, and love-buckets ... free coffee during the week.

What makes this HOLY GROUND is our humanity. Our homes & trailer parks ... nursing homes and re-hab centers ... our apartments and cottages ----- ALL HOLY GROUND. It’s where God meets us and loves us ... and it’s where he nudges us to love one another.

The only reason we’ve been here 50 years is YOU!! Ministers can help ... certainly God is in this place.

But you know, as well as I do ... “in life” (as da-coach says) ----- raising kids, running a business, caring for an aging parent, going to re-hab everyday ... life is about persistence.

It’s about endurance ... doing the “little things” ... it’s about being REAL ... it’s about being humble and gracious enough never to put yourself above anyone else.

So, we go to the Illinois Veteran’s Home in Manteno last Wednesday. Playing bingo.

We bring \$1000 in singles for prizes ... we have “We love Veterans” hats for everyone. These men and women have served our country with honor ... here’s a chance for us to give just a “little bit” back.

We are there an hour early ... and already one guy is in line ----- HE IS DETERMINED to get the first card!!

I come up to him ----- “Great to see you ... thanks for serving our country ... here is a hat for you.”

He looks at me with a look that could kill ----- “You can take your _____ hat and stick it!@!!”

Oh, can’t win them all!@!!

About half-way though the afternoon, I notice he’s won a few dollars:

“Congratulations, sir, you are doing GOOD!@!!”

He scowls at me ----- “I’d do a hell-of-a-lot better if you’d just leave me alone!@!!”

The lady who runs the place tells me I’m wasting my time trying to get him to smile. And I’m disappointed he didn’t seem to be enjoying himself. But on the way home ... I began to reflect.

In fact ... I’m a little disappointed in myself.

Sure ---- I wanted him to smile ... to be happy ... but: I DON’T WALK IN HIS SHOES.

He is a proud veteran ... he served our country.

There was a time when he was young and independent ... the world was his to conquer.

And now??? He is wheelchair-bound ... needs help going to the washroom. Instead of going to work everyday ... he is playing afternoon bingo with “whipper-snappers” like me who never had to endure boot-camp.

I don’t know what it’s like to be in his shoes ... no wonder he is angry!!

His journey is unique ... so is mine ... so is yours.

Then there is Connor ----- 3 years old ... cancer ... already in the midst of a "battle of a life-time."

Years ago ... Connor's mom and our daughter played on the same Sandburg High School basketball team.
I was talking to Connor's grandpa ... we were reminiscing about those seemingly "care-free days" ----- sitting in the bleachers, cheering for our daughters on the basketball court.

After high school ... we all go our separate ways.

Now ---- 15+ years later ... we are holding hands in prayer in a hospital waiting room ... yes, prayin' for his grandson.

Life is like sitting in the bleachers.

We watch and root for those we love. You relish the game ... you bask in the moment.

But eventually ... the whistle blows ... you gotta get down from the bleachers & walk out the door into the world.

And we just never know what the rest of the day and tomorrow will bring.

We do know this ----- TOMORROW WILL BRING SOMETHING.

And we'll be there ----- with the Lord of life having us in "the palm of his hand."

Speaking of "saints" ...

And ----- one of the reasons why being part of a church can be a lot of fun ...

She and her mom started coming to church a few years ago.

I would ask Elise: "Hey, how is your dad?"

"Oh, he's good ... but you'll never get him to come to church!@!!"

I love it when someone tells me that!!

This morning I go outside ... and the parking lots is becoming like a sheet of ice.

I get on the phone: "Hank ...this is the rev ... the parking lot is ice!@!!"

"Don, I'll be there in 3 minutes." I hang up the phone ... he's already pulling into the lot ...with salt flying everywhere!@!!

HANK ---- THANKS SO MUCH FOR DOING THIS ... AND, BY THE WAY ...

this doesn't count as church!@!!

Actually ... it does "count" ...

This has been sacred ground for 50 years ...and it will be forever.

And ... it's goofs like you and me ...and salt-guys like Hank ...

who make times like "now" just plain FUN!!

Don Borling

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January 30, 20112

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