

Sermon: January 9, 2011

“Inside job”

I felt so “organized” this week. Had my kids’ sermon props all set ... even some thoughts about the sermon before Sunday morning ... I wanted so much to talk about “baptism” this morning ... because of the gospel about Jesus’ baptism. But then “yesterday” happened.

You are thinking about Tucson ...so am I. Can’t help but share what’s in my heart and soul.

The shooting in Tucson ---- just sends “shivers” up-and-down our souls. Innocent people killed ... others hurt.
A U.S. representative ... a 9-year-old girl ...
a 22-year-old does this ----- young like one of our kids!@!!

Everyday we rely on the decency and kindness of the average person.

It’s like this morning. Gunder-dog and I get into my pick-up ... it’s 5:00 am. On our way to open the church, we stop by Dunkin’ Donuts ... to get stuff for our youth group. There’s two young people workin’ the counter ... the store is empty ... I walk right in. These kids assume I’m not some “nut-case” who will do them harm. But we know ----- anyone can walk in that door. I come to the church ... like I do everyday ... turn the key, un-lock the door. It’s just me ... alone ... in this big building. Any nut who doesn’t like religion could walk in and do something stupid.

This is America. It’s about being free. The door is open, the coffee’s on we take for granted the goodness and decency of the human spirit.

But every once-in-a-while ... something like “yesterday” happens ... and we are hit in the face with the dark side of humanity. It makes us angry ...and even afraid.

“Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.”

Peace is a seed ... it’s planted “in here” ... it’s an INSIDE JOB.

When you are “at peace” with yourself ... then you don’t have to be at war with anyone else.

Each of us knows ... in our own way ... we live in a world that can be very angry and violent.

--- There’s more anger in sports today.

--- More anger in our schools.

--- More anger in our politics.

Kids are bullied ... other kids think it’s ok to bully.

Racial intolerance is still very much alive ... along with cultural intolerance ... and, unfortunately, religious intolerance, too. So many “out there” use their religion (even their so-called “Christianity”) as an excuse to lash-out at those who are different.

You and I ----- we are just “specks” in the universe. We may think our homes & church & families don’t make much of a difference in the whole world scene.

Not so.

Peace, understanding, gentleness, fair-play, trust, goodness ----- it’s all gotta start somewhere.

Yes ---- peace is an inside job ... but so is violence.

So, what we say and do here ... what we sing and pray for here ... has a lot more power than we may ever know.

I would hope ----- if any of the “kids” who has grown up is ever be tempted to hurt another person ... they will first look deep inside their heart and soul ... maybe open the door of their closet, and see some of the “stupid toys” that have been given to them in kids’ sermons over the years ... and they would be reminded of God’s spirit and what it means, in life, to take the “high road” ...

Hopefully we’ll always hear the voice ----- be at peace with who you are ... you are God’s child ... never intentionally hurt another of God’s children.

I don’t know what the answer is ... and ----- I don’t know exactly what to pray for anymore ...

But ----- we all have much to pray for ... and we have some thinking & reflecting to do ...
about what's important and what's not.

Yes, I was thinking about Baptism this week ... and maybe it does speak to what we're talking about today.

Our way of doing a baptism is pretty delicate ... and yet --- it's such a powerful symbol of acceptance.

John the Baptist puts Jesus under water ... then Jesus comes out ... and he hears a voice:

“THIS IS MY SON ... WITH WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.”

We just baptized our grandson and granddaughter ... and I hear a voice: THIS IS MY GRANDCHILD ...
WITH WHOM I AM PLEASED!@!!

How about you? ... don't you want to feel this way???? You are chosen ... you are special ... and there
is a God and some folks out there who are PLEASED WITH YOU.

Baptism ... it's about coming together as God's children ... and being “pleased” with who you are.

It's about knowing ----- each of us is “chosen” ... we come out the water of life and look at the world with
fresh perspective and a re-born attitude.

I share in a lot of what I call ----- “non-church” baptisms.

These are folks who really don't go to church much ... they don't think about the church much ... but they have
their kid baptized “just in case”!@!!

“Reverend ... will you christen my daughter????”

Well ----- first of all ... we christen boats and baptize children!@!!

And then there is the “family discussion” ...

My daughter was baptized Catholic ... my nephew baptized Lutheran ... my brother was baptized
Methodist ... so, there is some division here in the family about which way to go!@!!

This is why I need to sit these folks down and set the record straight ...

You are not baptized Lutheran ...

nor are you baptized Catholic ...

nor are you baptized Methodist ...

WE ARE BAPTIZED HUMAN ...

The day will come ... when these kids will grow up and decide what religion (if any at all) they
want to be.

It's our humanity bringing us together.

And just maybe ... what we have here ... in this humble place ----- IS GOOD MEDICINE.

If and when this message of goodness and acceptance can help ONE SOUL discover or re-discover his/her
purpose in life ... then maybe what happened in Tucson doesn't have to happen again.

This is probably too simple.

But ----- Jesus was simple ... and 2000+ years later ... we are still talking about him.

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