

Sermon: June 5, 2011

"The mailbox"

Ever had a bad day? ... week? ... month? ... year?

At the end of the day ... you kind-of step back and wonder ----- can I learn something from this? Is there a sign? ... a message?

I don't, for a minute, believe God intentionally does things to people.

He doesn't pick certain people out ... and "punish" them ... he doesn't "favor" some over others ...

God doesn't tell us which way to turn in life.

GOD IS IN THE VERY FABRIC OF LIFE ITSELF ... he lives in the "moments" of our lives.

God doesn't "test" us ... LIFE TESTS US.

Every day is a test ----- going to re-hab, working every day, raising a family ... paying our bills, losing your home ... Joplin, Missouri ... saying "good-bye" to someone you love.

As I get older ... more and more I realize ----- life is about our ATTITUDE ... it's about PERSPECTIVE.

Remember the saying that became popular a few years ago ... it was on bracelets and t-shirts ...

WWJD: "what would Jesus do?"

Now, it's presumptuous to think we KNOW what Jesus would do.

It's arrogant to think we know Jesus' spirit and will. Jesus is unique: God's son, our messiah.

And yet if we really BELIEVE ... if our faith and spirit and what we pray about and worship about here ...

if it's really supposed to make a difference in our lives ... then we need to TAKE THE LEAP:

we need to "scoop-up" the moments and times of our lives and ask the question ----

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

Or ... maybe more personally: as a person who believes in the spirit of Jesus ...

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO???

I ... like many of you ... I struggle with life at times.

I ... like many of you ... I live life with PASSION. I have incredibly strong feelings about stuff and people.

The older I get ... my knees get weaker, but my passion for life gets stronger.

I love LOVE I love being in love ... I love the power of love.

And ... as much as I love LOVE ... I can't stand HATE. I don't like being hated ... and I don't like the feeling of hating someone else.

I have learned over time ----- "love" and "hate" are part of the same circle of life. When you live life passionately ... well, love and hate are part of the circle in which we live. Sometimes we "hate" the very people and things we "love" the most.

Tuesday was a tough day. I needed to get home ----- to see Jude's face, to be touched by Q's innocence.

I walk over to get our mail ... and someone has beaten-in our mailbox. No one else's on the block ... just ours. Looking at the mailbox makes me sad ... it becomes symbolic of what hate can do to your soul.

Do you have "smashed mailboxes" in your life? ... in your heart? ... in your soul?

You try to open the door and reach-in ... but the damage is already done!@!!

So, I call "Mr. Fix-it" ... asking him if he can put a new mailbox up for Jude and me. I have a mailbox here at the church. I used it for a kids' sermons some 3 years ago ... and it's been sitting on the shelf out there since then.

He takes the mailbox ... goes to our house ... and installs it right away.

Ed (i.e., Mr. Fix-it) calls me.

“Don, I have a story to tell.” Minutes later Ed and his wife of 49 years (Annie) are sitting in my office.

“Thanks, Ed ... for doing this ... really appreciate it ...”

“Don ... there is more ... here’s what happened ...”

(Oh, I can feel a sermon coming on!!)

ED’S STORY

I pick up the box to put it on your post ... and I think I hear something rattle. I look inside quickly, and don’t see anything. I’m mounting it ... and I’m sure I hear something.

(Hey, Ed ... after 49 years of marriage ... people hear lots of things they don’t understand!@!!)

I open the mailbox again, reach in, and see a piece of paper stuck in the corner. I look closely ... it’s a dollar bill.

At least I think it is.

I unwrap it some more ... another zero ... hey, it’s a 10 dollar bill.

But there is another zero ----- it’s a hundred dollar bill!!

So, Don ... here it is: now you can put it toward is intended use.

I look at Ed: “You know ... a lesser man would have kept the money ...”

On the other hand ... after listening to “Fred stories” for over 30 years ... if he had kept it, God probably would have haunted him for the rest of his life. Now, of course, Ed will be bucking for a raise: not only does he fix things at the church and at the pastor’s house ... but he also finds money ... and ---- he’s giving me sermon material!!

It would be fun to believe God put that 100 dollar bill there ... to remind a tired minister of the goodness of the human spirit. It would be fun to think this was a miracle.

Who knows???

For sure: IT WAS A RANDOM MOMENT.

Life is about random moments.

*A hurricane changing the whole history of a town.

*Words like “cancer” and “Alzheimer’s” ... forever changing the life of you and your family.

*A little child comes into your life ... and you re-discover that skip in your step.

*A chance encounter ... and you are “best friends” forever.

*A crumpled 100 dollar bill ... and the smile and laughter return to your belly.

YES, FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON.

A time for find things, a time to lose things.

A time to keep ... a time to give stuff away.

A time to love ... and, yes, a time to hate.

Some “times” are easier than others ... and they may be “random.”

But never so random ... that we can’t see the face of God.

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