

Sermon: March 27, 2011
"DON'T MENTION GOD??"

You gotta love Jesus.
He takes the bologna out of religion. He strips religion bare ... take the phoniness out of it ...
AND MAKES IT REAL!!

The gospel lesson this morning is an example.
The Samaritan woman at the well. She's been married 5 times ... and Jesus comes up to her, asking for a drink of water. The woman can't believe anyone would even talk to her ... she's an outcast!!
"Sir, I'm a Samaritan ... I've been married 5 times ..." Jesus answers --- I KNOW.
Jesus continues: "This water you give me ... I will drink it, and eventually be thirsty again.
But ---- the water I give to YOU: it's like a spring ----- gushing up inside your soul. It is spiritual water ...
and YOU WILL NEVER BE THIRSTY AGAIN."

This is exactly why this humble place is here.

As we worship here ... there is so much on our plates.

The people in Japan ... our brothers and sisters in Libya, Syria, and Egypt.
Last week on vacation we were at a breakfast buffet in our hotel. I kept thinking: I wish someone could just air-lift this buffet to Japan ----- they need the food ... we don't. I noticed the gentleman making our omelettes ... he is from Haiti. I ask him ---- do you have family in Haiti? He looks at me intensely:
YES ... AND I'VE BEEN TRYING FOR YEARS TO GET THEM OVER HERE TO AMERICA.
What a journey. How about yours???? ----- re-hab ... kids in school ... AA meetings ... job hunting ...
just trying to pay your bills ...

The only way we get through all this is to have our souls full of living water.

Yes, we thirst.

Yes, we get hungry.

We can be lonely and tired and often confused.

Our faith is strong today ... but it may be weak tomorrow.

My Lord ----- WE ARE ONLY HUMAN.

Like the woman at the well ... we may not feel worthy. Maybe we've done things we wish we could take back.
Such is life.

The bottom line is ----- WE HAVE A GIFT. It's from God. It's from Jesus.
We have this living water inside of us. And ... if we can be humble and gracious enough to let this water flow inside of us ... well, we can get through most anything.

Along the way ... once in a while ... it's good to laugh at ourselves.

I think of this one person ... who often asks me: "DON, WHY DO YOU MAKE FUN OF RELIGION?"
First of all ... there is a lot to make fun of!! When we lose the capacity to laugh at ourselves ... well, we lose part of our humanity. I look at myself in the mirror: at times, I can be a real idiot!!

Had a wedding yesterday. She has grown up here. She always was ... and still is ---- a *delightful goof!!*

Most of all ---- she is delightfully human.

Her dad is one of those "guys" who doesn't darken the door of the church very often. Do you know someone like this??? Anyway ----- Bill walks his daughter up to the altar ... and I ask the question:
"WHO GIVES THIS WOMAN TO THIS MAN??? ... and, by the way, Bill HOW DOES IT FEEL
TO BE IN CHURCH???"

I start to laugh ... Bill is laughing ... pretty soon the whole church is "up for grabs" ...

Why? ... because we're human. Laughter is cleansing ... it sets us at ease ... it opens us up to the winds of God's spirit.

This is a place celebrating and embracing our humanity.

After the wedding ... I return a phone call ----- from a lady who is looking for someone to "do" her wedding.

"Thanks for calling back, Reverend

We want something very short and simple ----- maybe 10 minutes ... no mention of "God" ... a civil-kind-of wedding ... here's the date ... how much do you charge???"

There's a few moments of awkward silence on the phone.

Then I respond: *Julie ... I'm pretty laid-back and flexible ... and I enjoy doing weddings ... but ---- weddings are spiritual moments ... and I do need to mention GOD!@!! ... after all, God is there ... whether we believe he is or not ...*

She insists that her fiancé does not want God mentioned.

Julie ... that ain't gonna happen.

Then maybe I should try to find someone else.

I guess so. But ... if you and your fiancé ever decide to invite both me and God to your wedding ...

FEEL FREE TO CALL BACK.

I don't know much about God ... which is probably painfully obvious to you on Sunday mornings.

But ... in my ignorance ----- I LOVE GOD'S PRESENCE.

I'm glad he sent his son.

I enjoy all the stories.

And ... I realize more and more ----- *God is about living water.*

God is about the unknown.

God is about mysteries and questions ... and unexpected turns.

GOD KNOWS NO LABEL. HE KNOWS NO BARRIERS.

God is at the well.

He doesn't count marriages or sins.

And ---- no matter where you hold your ceremony ...

he may not be a guest ... but ... he will be there!!

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