

Sermon: March 6, 2011
"The TEACHER in all of us"

It's fun watching people grow up. I think of these "little goofs" who come up here for our kids' time. The kids who first came up here years ago ... they're in their 40's now. Your kids? ... your grand-kids? ... the kids "down the block"? ----- you wonder where life's journey will lead them. We have so many who have "grown up" here. There are lots of success stories ... kids-turned-adults who have found their niche. We have kids who have made some wrong turns ----- mistakes made, addictions to live with ... and yet they, too, come back. This is a safe place ... a place giving you the strength and humility to turn your life around.

The gospel lesson this morning is about the "transfiguration." The disciples have this experience on the mountain-top ... and they know precisely who Jesus is ... and what Jesus wants from them. Wouldn't it be nice if God's voice was that clear to us today?? Hearing God's voice ... pointing us in the right direction. I know there are lots of preachers and churches who claim to "know the way." They have answers ... they KNOW the Bible. Well ... this isn't the way it works here. There is so much I don't know ... a lot I probably never will know ... but ----- we share this amazing "journey of discovery" together.

THERE IS ONE THING WE DO KNOW HERE.

Religion is about the way we choose to walk through this world. It's about our voice, our spirit ... it's about planting seeds of goodness along the way. It's about simple-ordinary moments ----- in which we see God's face, hear his voice, and respond to his gentle nudges.

The disciples had a transfiguration experience on a mountain-top ... my latest "transfiguration experience" takes place in an elementary school gymnasium.

These are 4th graders ... it's basketball. I remember my days as a coach. I loved it. I was kind-of fun as a coach. But when it came teaching the kids "skills" ... well, I was horrible. Parents would say ---- "Don, nice knowing you this year ... but maybe next year ... we'll try a different team!@!!"

Hey, it's no fun going 0 – 15.

Anyway ... the other night ... Quinton's team is losing 22-6 ... with only 3-4 minutes left in the game. Now ... Q's coach is a wonderful-patient man. No matter what the score or how close ... each kid plays at least half the game. I enjoy watching him coach. I also watched the other coach. He has two stud-muffin guards ... and as the game winds down ... he keeps them in the game and encourages them to steal the ball from our team. The score mounts: 24-6 ... then 26-6 ... finally 32-6.

On my way home ... I'm trying to think "spiritual thoughts."

You know? ----- as coaches ... or teachers ... or preachers ... as parents/grandparents ... band-directors ... WE HAVE LOTS OF POWER IN A KID'S LIFE. Our eyes, our voices, our spirits and attitudes ----- these are our teaching tools. Teaching kids how to win with humility ... lose with grace ... respect the dignity and well-being of others. What it means to be "winner" in life ... what it means never to see yourself as a "loser."

This other coach had an opportunity ... to teach his kids about fairness and decency towards others ... about what it means to be a "real winner" ... and, honestly ---- *he blew it!!*

This whole subject of sports and competition ... well, it brings back lots of memories. There is a young man in our church ... he's probably about 34 years old now. He and his sister have grown-up here ... in fact, I get to do her wedding this fall. Anyway ----- Brian was the starting quarterback on the Sandburg High School football team ... and ---- played on our church basketball team. Brian was and is one of the most competitive people I know. He is one of those "kids" who can just will

his team to victory!@!!

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Brian is now the head football coach at Stagg High School. This past year his team ended the season 0 – 9.

Several weeks ago Brian and his wife Kim were in church.

“Brian ... I know you had a tough year ... but if anyone can handle it with grace ... you can.”

“Don ----- hanging around you and the church all those years ... I learned to lose with grace.”

Brian is a “winner.”

I’ve always hoped ... and it’s one of the many reason I enjoy so much of what happens here ... yes, I’ve always hoped we teach people how to win with humble grace ... and how to lose with quiet courage and strength. What is a real winner anyway???

Brian, first and foremost ... is a man of goodness and grace.

Yes, he’s a coach ... but first of all ----- he is a man who reaches down into the hearts and spirits of young people and helps them learn: *what’s important in life, and what’s not ...*

We are all human.

Each of us falls short.

We need forgiveness.

In the midst of this ... LET US NEVER FORGET ----- to some people who grace our path ... we become the face of a “humble carpenter.”

Despite our frailties and shortcomings ... through our humble journey, God’s “little people” learn what it’s like to forgive and love ... what it’s like to be a winner or a loser ... what it’s like to hold someone in the palm of God’s hand.

By the way ...

after the game ... I go up to Q’s coach: “THANKS FOR THE WAY YOU TAKE CARE OF OUR KIDS.”

Their last game is Thursday. The kids on the team will get a prize:

AN ALL SAINTS GREY T-SHIRT ... “Never quit ... all heart.”

The kids will take the shirt ... probably roll their eyes ... and put it safely away in a drawer somewhere and never wear it.

BUT ... AT LEAST ... I’LL FEEL BETTER!!

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