

Sermon: May 29, 2011
"Frankie and the veterans"

We've all been through stuff ... it's all part of who we are today ... as we gather in this humble place.
Mechanic, coach, nanny, artist, preacher, military, police officer ...
Not long ago ... one of our young folks asks me: "Pastor Don, what do you have to do to become a minister?"
How long does it take?
4 years of college. 4 more of seminary. 8 years.
"But, Pastor Don ... you set-up tables and chairs ... tell stories about Fred ("God loves you ...") ... you make t-shirts and hats ... make sure the coffee is hot in the morning, the beer cold in the afternoon ...
this takes 8 years!@!?"

Amazing, isn't it???

I know ---- my most important TEXT BOOK is ***the text book of everyday-life.***
We all work and play.
We succeed and we fail.
We reach a few mountain-tops ... we spend some time in the valley.
We love and we care ... there are times when we hate and walk the other way.

This is why I love the passage from Ecclesiastes so much:
For everything there is a season ... a time for every matter under heaven.
The "times of our lives" are our teacher ... our rabbi.
It's in the "times of our lives" that we discover who we are, what we are made of ... here we find God, and friendship, and the meaning of life.

This is why Jesus is so incredibly unique.
He doesn't tell people how to live ... he shows them. In his words, his touch, his goodness.
He doesn't talk about sin ... he eats with sinners.
He doesn't describe God ... HE IS GOD ----- this amazing God who comes alive in acts of forgiveness & kindness & grace.

Every day ... I think of people and moments ... in which I discover what life is all about.
As I think someone you think of someone, too.
In the past 10 years or so ... she has been "to hell and back." Maybe this is you ... maybe it's someone you love. Many of you know what it is like ...
Something has gone drastically wrong ... you have a steep wall to climb ...
You have a journey to complete, and you finally get there ...
Your kid is finally safe ... has put his demons behind him ...
You get that long-awaited degree ... your company finally turns the corner ...
You come back from Afghanistan ... your cancer is in remission ...

AND THEN SOMETHING HAPPENS. Like we often say: 2 steps forward ... and now 3 steps back.
Last week she gets the news she never wanted to hear again: *your cancer is back.*
And so what does she do???

She comes to church ... and spends the rest of her day serving lunch to visually impaired veterans.

I'm not a veteran ... often wish I was.
But I am often "visually impaired."
Too often ---- I can't "see the forest through the trees."

How many times have I lost "sight" of what's important in life.
I often don't "see" the goodness all around me in this world.
Sometimes I fail to "open my eyes" to the needs and spirits of others.

Last Sunday I couldn't help but notice a lady who probably has every right to cry "why me???" ...
Yet I see her take her walker into Charter Hall ... to be with our veterans ...
and once again ----- "I SEE THE LIGHT."
I am reminded once again why the best "textbook" is life itself.
Watching people like Frankie live.

Personally ... I live with this "miracle" every day.
With a lady who never lets cancer define her.
In my wife Jude ... I see the very fabric of what it means to "let the light shine."

The best "cure" for what ails us is ----- **to give unto others.**
GIVING: life's most powerful "medication."

The afternoon is ending ... the veterans are walking to their bus ----- each one being "guided" by
one of our folks.

One of the gentleman ... dark glasses, white cane in hand, hanging-on to one of our ladies ...

Oh ---- he may be blind ... but "he sees the light" ...

He says to her:

"Thank-you so much for today.

Being here ... I feel like I'm on vacation ..."

For many of us ... Memorial weekend is a "4-day vacation" ...

but it's much more.

A time to remember.

A time to re-discover the "ultimate goodness" of a God who loves us ...

and our veterans ---- who protect us.

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