

Sermon: September 25, 2011

"Famous"

I've been doing a lot of reflecting lately ... about what is "missing" in the world today.

In many ways ... the world feels very HARSH.

I know many of you have quit watching the news ... you don't read the newspaper ... because there is so much negativity. It's kind-of like a "spiritual cancer" ... and after a while, it brings you down.

**It's like being in a relationship ... and you are always trying to "prove yourself worthy" to the other person.

*Or being on a team ... and you know ---- as soon as you make a mistake, you'll be riding the bench!!

*Kind-of like being in a church ... and you feel like you have to be perfect in order to be worthy of salvation.

*Or having a job ... and you wonder If you'll still be there in two weeks.

Maybe this is why it's so easy today to be depressed.

It's easy ... in these tough and unpredictable times ... to get down on yourself, and doubt yourself.

Have you ever taken time to think of all the "roles" you play ... in your daily and routine life??

I think of my life ... you think of yours.

parent ... spouse ... friend

coach ... neighbor ... uncle ... aunt ... cousin ...

co-worker ... church member ... example ... step-mom ... teammate ...

boss ... pastor ... union-steward ... secretary ... custodian ... law partner ... artist ...

nurse's aid ... men's club ... "the guy who walks the dog every morning" ...

Over time ... have you changed? Have you grown? Lessons learned?

Do you have regrets? Would like to do some things over again? Do you wonder where the time has gone??

There was a time when I longed to be "famous." I wanted to "rise above the crowd."

I wanted to be the best ball player ... the best runner ... best student ... best pastor ...

be head of the biggest church.

How about you? It's good to have dreams ... good to have a vision for your life.

And then there comes the time when I realize: *Most of my dreams center around ME!!*

When we are full of our own self-centered dreams ... there can come a time when we crash into a wall.

Yes ---- the world does have a way of humbling us!@!!

There is some good stuff in the 2nd lesson for today.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. But in humility --- regard others as better than yourself ...

look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others."

Look at Jesus ----- maybe the most gifted and incredible of all human beings!!

And not only this ... he's the Son of God ... our savior!!

And what did Jesus do????

"He emptied himself ... he gave it all!!"

And 2000+ years later ... we are still talking about him ... singing about him ... praying to him ...

worshipping him ... being inspired by him ----- because his spirit continues to grow.

So, Don ---- you want to grow and be famous???

Then ... put others first ... empty yourself of all the conceit and vain ambition ...

and ***you will be famous ... for all the right reasons!!***

Ironically ... I received a poem this week in the mail ... entitled "FAMOUS."

It's from the "Poetry Foundation" ... and written by Naomi Shihab Nye.

A few excerpts:

A river is famous to the fish.

The idea you carry in your bosom ... is famous to your bosom.

The bent photograph is famous to the one who carries it, not to the one who is pictured.

I want to be famous to shuffling men, who smile while crossing the streets ...

to sticky children in grocery lines ...

and this is the part I like the best:

I want to be famous in the way a pulley is famous, or a buttonhole ...

not because it did anything spectacular, but because it never forgot what it could do.

It's easy ... in life ... to forget what we are "called" to do.

It's about humility ... and love ... and never forgetting ...

in the "cosmic stream of things" ... compared to the whole universe ----- each of us may be puny.

But ... in the life of one other person who longs for love and purpose ... we just might be the one carrying the

"spirit of Jesus" into that person's life.

By the way ... how about the gospel???

A man has two sons. He asks the "bad son" to help him in the vineyard ... and the son says "no."
Maybe like us ----- we ask our kid to clean his room, mow the lawn, take his little sister to the park ...

and the first word out of his mouth is "NO."

Then he asks the "good son" to do the same ... and this son says "yes."

The same with us???? ... maybe we have that one kid who always says the right thing.

Later on ... the "bad son" has 2nd thoughts: hey, I shouldn't have said "no" ... OK ... I'll take
my little sister to the park.

And the "good son"????? ... sure, he said "yes" ... he always does ... but ---- he's a "no-show."

Jesus asks the question: "which of these 2 sons does my will???"

It's easy in life to say "all the right things." It's easy to make promises ... but it's what's inside that counts.

Jesus says: *It's the prostitutes and sinners who are going into the kingdom ahead of you!!*

This is why I get along with non-religious people better than the "religious" ones: they are sinners like me!!

We sinners are sometimes too quick to say "no" ... and our lives are far from perfect ...

but ultimately ----- we say "yes" to our imperfections and let the spirit of Jesus into our hearts!!

Life and the church --- it's not about being perfect ... it's not about saying all the "right things"
and being "famous."

It's about finding our "niche" ... as humble as it may be.

Kind-of like the pulley ... and the button hole ----- just doing ... each day ... what I'm able to do.

I guess it's in the "un-spectacular" moments of our lives ... that we can be a little bit like Jesus.

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