

Sermon: January 1, 2012

"Human religion"

January 1 ... a new year ... just a few of us gathered this morning ... and it's ok.

Time to reflect ... in the simple quietness of this place.

It is a good time to "re-evaluate" ----- who am I? ... where have I been? ...

do I want to do anything different this year???

What have we learned?

What has life taught us?

Is there anything I've discovered ... that can help me be a better person?

My favorite text book ... is LIFE ITSELF.

The daily journey ... the twists and turns ... it's here that God nudges us and speaks to us.

You know as well as I do ----- life can humble us, in a moment of time.

Life can teach us ----- to be more gracious ... less self-centered ... less controlling.

This morning ... I have one **discovery** I'd like to share ... and one **goal**.

During the past year ... I have discovered ----- *God is more real than I ever thought possible.*

Now I have no clue if God has a plan for us. (I don't even know what my own plan is!!)

And I sure don't know much about God's "will."

I do know ---- God's will has nothing to do with people getting cancer or Alzheimer's ... or parents having to say "good-bye" to one of their kids ... or people who face one tough challenge after another. God wants all of us to live full and abundant lives ... even tho' it doesn't always happen the way we or God want.

My guess is:

God wants us to be good to ourselves.

And ---- God wants us to be good to each other.

Pretty basic stuff.

I do know: GOD IS RIGHT HERE.

He's in us ... he is among us ... God is in the *very fiber of life itself*.

Each moment we live ... every turn we take ... in the midst of all the peaks and valleys:

GOD IS THERE.

He loves us ... he holds us.

We don't have to find God ... or look for God ... or pretend to be God.

We just need to enjoy him ... believe in him ... and trust him.

There is no one church ... no one religion that has a better b-line to God than anyone else.

To be one of God's children ... to inherit the gift of salvation ----- we just need to be REAL.

We need to be human ... genuinely human.

My one goal for this year is to help people see religion as something both REAL and GENTLE.

Religion ... ultimately ... is not about going to church.

I'm glad you do ... 'cause it keeps goofs like me employed and off the street!!

Going to church is about "going to church."

Hopefully going to church is uplifting ... maybe even fun. Free coffee ... a toy for the kids.

RELIGION is about what happens when you WALK OUT THE DOOR.

What good does it do? to go to mass everyday ... or to attend church every Sunday ... if it doesn't make a difference in the way we see and treat each other???

My neighbor knocks on our door ... it's 10:00 PM.

He's upset ... his wife's grandma has just died. I can tell he is nervous.

"Don ... her old church is no longer there ... we haven't been going to church ... "

He rambles on ...

"Brian ----- do you want me to do the funeral?????"

Will you? Can you?

"Brian ---- this is why we are here. You don't have to be a member.

There is one qualification for being part of a church ... part of the Body of Christ --- and that's your HUMANITY!"

Jesus doesn't carry around membership papers ... what he carries is YOUR HEART!

The phone rings yesterday. It's a couple who was married here ... now they have a child.

"Don ... we don't have a church ... we are Catholic ..."

"So is most of our church ... besides, being Catholic is curable!@!!" ----- we laugh.

In fact ... we need to laugh more!@!!

"So, Don ... if our baby is baptized at your church ... does that make her Lutheran???"

No. We're not baptized Catholic or Lutheran or Methodist ...

We are baptized human!!

Your daughter will have plenty of time ... as she grows ... to decide what kind of church to join.

In the meantime ... just enjoy the message ----- one of acceptance and God's grace.

This year ... I, like you ----- want to grow.

I want to learn.

I want to help make religion more open ... a bit gentler and kinder ... more real.

I realize, too ----- growing as a church ... it's not about "how big" or "how much" ...

it's about our heart and our soul.

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