

Sermon: July 7, 2019  
"I saw America today"

Yes, I saw a lot of America this weekend ... I'm sure you did, too. Each of us sees America in our own way.  
In our own time, using our own eyes.

I get up ... ready to spend another electrifying day at the furry convention ---- called Anthrocon, in Pittsburg. The hotel has a breakfast buffet. I get there early ---- to read, and to have some coffee. One of the servers comes over ----- says "hi" ... cleans the table ... offers to get more coffee. I say "thanks" ... give him a five-dollar bill. He smiles ... and now we are best friends.

I get ready to leave ... tell him I'll be back soon with my family. He talks to me: "Sir, my name is Belasami (I may be spelling this wrong). I am an American citizen ... born in Africa. I am a new hire here, and I really like my job ... and I need it!! There are some "customer satisfaction" forms at the desk.

Would you fill one out ... and maybe mention my name??"

I fill it out. I write ----- "Just watching Belasami work and take care of people ... he makes my day better."

The skip in his steps. The smile. The pride.

It's Thursday ... July 4<sup>th</sup> ... a day to celebrate the spirit of our country ...  
and it all comes alive in a man I just met.

It's early yesterday ... time to check out. I go to the desk and ask if I can borrow one of the luggage racks. This big guy comes up to me: "Sir, no problem. Let me get one ... I'll come up to your room and get your luggage, and then bring it all down to your vehicle.

"Not necessary, sir ... I can do it."

"Please ----- allow me."

YOU JUST WANT THE BIG TIP, RIGHT?? He smiles: Well ... that sure wouldn't hurt!@!!

If you had to draw a picture of a guy who grew up and works in Pittsburg ... you would draw Jason ---- the baggage guy. Big. Muscles. Beard. Low-raspy voice.

How long have you been doing this, Jason?

18 years. Yup --- married, 3 great kids ... it's a good-sometimes-hard job. Been able to pay for my 15-year-old son to be on a traveling hockey team. Would you like to see his picture??? ----- of course!!

18 years hauling peoples' luggage ...waiting on everyone ... whoa!! ... I could write a book!!

I laugh: I've been preaching at the same church for 45 years ... I could write a book!!

He laughs back: WELL, REV ----- LET'S DO IT!!

For me ... "America" is personal.

It's you. Our friends from the VFW. It's Belasami --- his pride, the skip in his steps.

It's Jason --- his pride, his family.

It's the freedom to un-lock the door of the church everyday. It's sharing life's moments with you.

It's the power of love ... the quiet courage to face whatever meets us down life's road.

It's David's flag ... here on the altar. It's a guy in Hawaii, who is a part of what we are doing today.

We are an incredibly powerful country. And, yes ... like in the readings Joe has just shared with us ----- there are times when we have to go to war. Lives are lost. Many of you have faced this.

But ----- the most important POWER is what lies deep inside the souls of each one of us.

The power of love. The power of goodness and kindness.

The power of everyday moments ... and gracing these moments with the  
very best we have to offer.

Jesus teaches us about honor and valor and courage. He teaches us about where God lives. Yes ---- God lives in the very depths of our humanity. God lives and walks in the journeys of everyday people ... and in the choices we make.

I close on a personal note ... a personal story. This is all we have, right??? ---- our personal stories. As life goes on ... as we age ...well ---- we all age!! We go from age 5 to 10 ... today Ben receives his "first Communion" ... we go from 15 to 25 ... 30 to 40 ..... 90 someday??? Maybe something happens in your life ... and it forever changes you. I think of some of the things I say all the time --- maybe too often??

**\*\*It is what it is!! Right now ... here we are ---- and "it is what it is."  
Everything we've been through ... it's a part of who we are today.**

As we go through this journey called life ... no matter how old or young ----- we can look back, we can look deep inside our soul ... "It will never be the same, but it will be ok." We believe in a God who loves us ... and we have each other ----- yes, it will be ok.

I think of one of the words on the bracelet you all received this morning: COURAGE. I read these words everyday: "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day ... saying: I will try again tomorrow." We all have more tomorrows ahead of us. Just maybe we have more courage than we ever thought possible.

I came here the first Sunday in July, 1974. I was 25 ---- "too young." The All Saints church board made it clear to the "powers that be" ----- we need someone with experience. Ministers keep coming and then going after just a year or two. Well --- experience costs money ... the church had no money ... so they got stuck with me!!

On the other end of the spectrum. One of my non- church buddies is talking with his neighbor. His neighbor is looking for a church home for his family. Can you recommend a church? My buddy replies:  
Try All Saints ... it's a good church.  
What's the minister like? Well --- just visit and see.  
How old is he??? Well ... he's been there 40-some years ... I think he just turned 70.  
Oh, my gosh ..... we don't want someone that old!@!!

Amazing ... how in a span of 45 years ... you can go from "too young" to "too old"!! We live in a country where being "too old" or "too young" doesn't have to define us. In America ... 18-year-olds have died to keep us free. In America ...people in their 90's still teach us how to live. A 33-year-old carpenter is at the center of who we are every Sunday ----- where we are reminded:  
*HONOR, VALOR, COURAGE ----- it's not about how much or how many ...  
it's about who we are deep inside our soul.*

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