

Sermon: June 30, 2019
"More stories ... more life"

Had a wedding yesterday ... wonderful young couple. The bride teaches in an elementary school ... the groom is on the staff at Stagg High School. Lots of emotion during the service. The bride's mom (who used to work at Quinton's school years ago) ... she is going through her second journey with breast cancer. The groom's mom just died this past February. There is a depth of spirit "in the aire."

The ring-bearer, whose dad is in the wedding party ----- he sprints up the aisle ... and literally jumps into his father's arms. So cute. So safe.

The bride's mom has a beautiful hair-piece ... she is determined to "have hair" for the wedding!! The groom's dad is shedding a few tears ... holding the rose, in memory of his late wife.

I'm thinking about what we talked about last Sunday ---- EVERYONE HAS A STORY!! Each of us is on a journey ... and no two journeys are the same. Our kid's wedding ... the funeral of someone we love ... here on Sunday morning ----- we bring our journeys with us. The good. The bad. Everything in-between. The "gunk." The "alleluias" ----- it's all inside of us, and it's part of who we are.

This week I've been thinking so much about KIDS. Little kids. Big kids. My kids. Your kids. Maybe it's all the stories about kids who are hurt or abandoned or just don't seem to have a chance. Kids have no say about being born ---- when, to whom, where. They are born into this world ... and there the world is ----- it's just handed to them.

I, like many of you, am lucky. I was born into a home of loving parents and people who cared. I was allowed "the freedom to be a kid."

"Children of the heavenly father ... safely in his bosom gather. Nestling bird nor star in heaven, such a refuge 'er was given."

I guess this is why last week ----- that little boy and his mom, sitting on the lawn by Trader Joe's ... with a sign saying "help me." I just wanted to say to that little boy's family and friends ... to everyone who brings a new life into this world ... to anyone who is tempted to harm or give up on these little ones: THIS CANNOT BE. EVERY CHILD DESERVES a chance to dream ... to hope ... to be safe ... to go to school ... to go to church ... to smile and laugh ... and be the best God wants them to be!@!!

I'm sure we all have "moments" in our lives ... happenings ... that, when we look back on them: they remind us of what life is all about. When I get selfish and stupid and self-centered I need to look back at certain moments ... and discover anew how we are called to live. How about you? what are some of your life-changing moments??

Heartland Children's Home.

Kristal is here with us. She came to Heartland as a fragile 3-year-old. She is now 33 ----- a beautiful miracle in God's kingdom. I remember my first trip to Heartland ----- some 25 years ago.

Only a double-wide trailer back then ... an amazing 18 acres of love and farmland.

I met Brad. A "shaken baby." Everyday just lying in his bed.

Each day I would hold him for a while. Brad --- can you see me? What are you thinking? Are you sad? happy? ----- one of God's children. I know there is a heaven where kids like

Brad can fulfill their dreams and walk tall.

I remember going back to Heartland ... with Joe ... to share in his funeral.
Without saying a word ... Brad teaches us about life. Precious and fragile ... never to be taken for granted.
To be lived: with grace, courage, and unselfishness. Yes ----- Brad, our rabbi.

On the other end of life's spectrum ...
Tomorrow Dr. Tom Regan will be laid to rest. Amazing surgeon. More important: a kind and humble man.
I have a lot of his art-work in my body ... 2 hips and a knee.
I remember not long after my knee replacement ... my hip started going south. Found out ... because of a
change in my insurance company ... the hip re-placement would not be covered.
"Pre-existing condition."
Heck ----- my whole life is a PRE-EXISTING CONDITION.

Oh, well. I made arrangements with the hospital and doctor to pay for it ---- it will work out!!
After surgery ... when I saw the physician cost on the "explanation of benefits" ... I immediately sent
Dr. Regan a check. A couple weeks later I get some mail from his office.
I'm thinking ... "I hope he got my check."
I open the envelop ----- there is my check: CUT IN HALF.

I call Dr. Regan: YOU CAN'T DO THAT!!
He responds softly: YES, I CAN!!
But you don't have to do that.
I'll never forget his response ... it fuels my soul everyday:
"Don ... it's fun in life ... to do things you don't HAVE TO DO!!"

Brad and Tom ----- a tag-team of GOODNESS.
Dr. Regan ---- a good Catholic.
Brad ---- a Lutheran by default.
And little kids ----- they don't care what religion they are.
They just want and deserve ordinary moments and miracles laced with goodness and love.

It's why we are here.
It's who we are.
It's where Jesus lives.

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