

Sermon: January 17, 2021

“Cal”

Sitting at my kitchen counter early this morning. Cup of coffee. Thinking about our new grandson Calvin. Wondering ----- what kind of world will he grow up in?? I hope it's a peaceful one.

I get a bit reflective early Sunday mornings.

I'll pretend I'm not the pastor ... just a ordinary member getting ready for church.

I write out a check for Peggy's and my offering envelope. Am I getting my money's worth? What does the church do with our donations? Why do I go to church? If I had to sit and listen to myself, would I come back next Sunday?

What is the church anyway??

We've learned a lot about the church this past “almost a year.”

It's not about the pastor ... it's more than a building. The church is “us” ... a spirit ... a way of living

What does it mean to be “Lutheran”???

My mind goes back to the 1500's to Martin Luther. He was a Catholic priest ... and a good one!!

He so much wanted his church to be more open and human.

Along the way ... Martin Luther discovered the quiet power of God's grace. And the seeds were planted for what is now our Lutheran traditions.

Tomorrow is a holiday ----- commemorating the life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Not long after coming here ... I began reading many of Dr. King's sermons. He may be a Baptist preacher ... but he sure sounds pretty Lutheran to me. His preaching is grounded in God' grace and unconditional love. His commitment to that message and to non-violence ---- we sure need his voice today.

So speaking of the name CALVIN.

It's the first name of our new grandson. It's also the first name of my friend Calvin Singletary.

His birthday was January 3 ... he died in 2017 ----- I deeply miss him.

I always enjoyed being with him ... especially watching his kids play sports.

I remember one day when he came by my office ... announcing he would start coming to church.

Great, Cal ----- what makes you want to come to this church?

He smiles: Hey, you need at least one African-American in your congregation!!

Cal -----we do have J.B.

OK ----- you need two!! ... diversity is good.

I remember when Cal died ... I looked over at J.B. ----- My friend, now it's up to you!!

I so enjoyed listening to Cal at our Bible studies. He loved reading and talking about the Scriptures.

I loved watching him ... sitting in the 2nd row ... “shaking and baking” whenever we sang

“Precious Lord.” (which, by the way, is our closing song today!!).

I miss you, buddy.

What really got to me is when he talked bout combat in Vietnam. He would get kind-of quiet ... with a tear running down his cheek. I got chills.

I would flash-back to the late '60's ----- the anti-war marches, the un-rest. I got to be in college while people like Calvin are risking their lives on the other side of the world.

Calvin kept me humble. He made it clear to me ----- I don't come to hear you preach.

I COME HERE FOR THE KIDS' SERMON!!

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Calvin ... like all of you ... have helped me understand:
To be Lutheran ... is to be human.
To be human ... is who we are.

I think of the book I've talked about a lot lately when the boy asks the mole:
What does it mean to be successful?
The mole responds: to be successful is to love.

I'm sitting at my desk this morning.
I hear someone outside the front door of the church.
I go out ----- a guy is putting sale on the sidewalk.
What are you doing here?
Hey, I just want to make things nice for when people come to church. But ----- I
won't be here for church.

Hey, you will be here!!
In my heart.

It's little moments of kindness like this that keep us going and open every day@!@!

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