

Sermon: September 19, 2021

"The parking spot"

This disciples are arguing about who is the greatest. Hard to believe ... that after 3 years of listening to their master's teachings ... they would be talking about which one of them is the greatest.

So, Jesus has to set them straight!!

You want to be first?? ----- then you have to be last. You have to be the servant of all.

Yes: "The first shall be last ... and the last shall be first."

Blessed are the humble. Blessed are the meek.

These words make me flash-back to when I first came here 47 years ago.

We had just a few families in the church ... so, I tried to visit each one of them.

I knock on the door ... and one of the four young daughters opens the door and lets me in.

Her dad is sitting at the cluttered dining room table. He looks at me:

"Get out of here. I don't need some minister coming here asking for money
and bothering my wife and kids."

I have never forgotten the mom and the kids. They didn't have much ... and lived in a tense environment.

I would visit the mom and kids. She worked at Sears in the mall.

When she drove to work ... she would park in the farthest parking spot from the Sears entrance.

"Joanne ... why do you park so far away?"

"Well ... the mall is new and busy. I don't want to take someone else's spot."

She was so humble. So kind.

Never said a bad word about anybody or anything. Despite the situation
in which she was living. She just "did what she had to do" to get through the day and make
sure her kids were ok.

She would be like Fred ... and sit at the end of the banquet table. And Jesus would say:

"Joanne ... please come up here ... you deserve at place of honor at my table."

Eventually the dad left the house. Just mom and the kids.

I got word one day that the dad died ----- alone in his apartment.

The family asks me to do the funeral. One of them asks me: "Pastor Don, what are you going
to say???? ... he was not a good person."

I remember my response:

Funerals are not about what the minister says. It's about the gospel ... Jesus' message.

I think of what Mattie has taught us. We all have a "heartsong" ----- that spirit of goodness making
each one of us unique. Some people lose touch with their heartsong. Mattie says when people like
that die ... they have to go to a place called "think time" ... where God has to remind them what

"life is all about." This is Mattie's way of describing "purgatory"!!

Who knows? ... I may have to spend some time there!!

I remember speaking at the funeral.

Our prayer is that he can ... in the "great beyond" ... find the peace he never allowed
himself to feel in this world.

Yes ... I, like you, have times when I lose touch with my "heartsong."

Anger. Selfishness. Fret and worry.
There is "lots of stuff" that can clog-up our inner spirit of goodness.

We just need to look and pray and cherish those moments when our heartsong speaks to us.

A couple months ago ... I received a letter from one of the daughters.
She is 50 years old. Happy. Loving family.
She wrote that her mom passed away ----- peacefully, surrounded by the family
she so humbly raised.

I went to the mall last week.
I was in a bit of a hurry ... so, I didn't park in Joanne's spot way off in the corner.
But I smiled thinking about her humility.

In closing ...
You all know how we feel about our veterans, our men and women in military service ...
our first responders.
This week "one of our own" was honored on the "big board" during a White Sox game.
He's one of our video guys ----- hiding in that room over there.
His picture is now on our screen.

HECTOR PEREZ.
PROUD MARINE AND VIETNAM VETERAN.

Hector. Please come out so we can say thanks.
And Hector would be the first to say ----- this honor is not just about him.
It's about all our men and women in uniform and first responders who give so much everyday,

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