

Father’s Day Sermon – June 20, 2010

Ladner United Church – Jim Short

0900 and 1100hrs Sermon

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May the meditations of our hearts and the words of my mouth be worthy and acceptable unto you and may your word come to your people either through me or despite me. Amen.

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I thought a lot this week about Father’s Day – not as big a day as Mother’s day is certainly....

And since I had never looked into its origin I did that:

- The idea for an official Father’s Day celebration came to a married daughter, seated in a church in Spokane, Washington, attentive to a Sunday sermon on Mother’s Day in 1910-two years after the first Mother’s Day observance in West Virginia.
- The daughter was Mrs. Sonora Smart Dodd. During the sermon, which extolled maternal sacrifices made for children, Mrs. Dodd realized that in her own family it had been her father, William Jackson Smart, a Civil War veteran, who had sacrificed-raising herself and five sons alone, following the early death of his wife in childbirth. For Mrs. Dodd, the hardships her father had endured on their eastern Washington farm called to mind the unsung feats of fathers everywhere
- Her proposed local Father’s Day celebration received strong support from the town’s ministers and members of the Spokane YMCA. The date suggested for the festivities, June 5, Mrs. Dodd’s father’s birthdays were three weeks away-had to be moved back to the nineteenth when ministers claimed they need extra time to prepare sermons on such a new subject as Father.
- Father’s Day, however, was not so quickly accepted as Mother’s Day. Members of the all-male Congress felt that a move to proclaim the day official might be interpreted as a self-congratulatory pat on the back.
- Eventually, in 1972-sixty-two years after it was proposed-Father’s Day was permanently established by President Richard Nixon.

- Historians seeking an ancient precedent for an official Father's Day observance have come up with only one: The Romans, every February, honored fathers-but only those deceased.

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Like Mother's Day – is a complex and emotional day – and probably never has parenting – the roles of moms and dads been so under the mirror, under critique, under change and transition as it has been in our day...

How my Grandfather, my father and I have understood parenting has some common ground but lots of differences

It is also a commercial holiday – it is the fifth largest card sending occasion with about 85 million greeting cards exchanged...

It is a day of thanks – we are encouraged to think about the good things of having father's and grand father's – to celebrate that and be thankful...

It is a day of mourning and sadness – my own father died 10 years ago and I was very very close to my grandfather on my dad's side so I am aware of that loss and those tears on such a day...or for someone who may not have had the children they wished they had due to various circumstances...

It can also be a day of anger and guilt – absent father's, father's who did not so a good job, for children who came from homes where father's were abusive and for families where there has been break up and broken relationships

And it's a day of reflection – my thoughts have gone at times this weekend to how I have done – could I have done better – what might I have done different...

And Father's Day and Mother's Day came to birth in a time in Western society when we thought only of the traditional the nuclear family...though it is a myth that there was a time when there was only the traditional nuclear family...

And we live now in the 21st century – more aware of our world – it's smaller because of the internet and mass communication – so we are aware of all kinds of different family configurations...

- Solo parent families – not only through circumstance but sometimes by choice
- Different ways of being and doing family in other cultures
- Gay and lesbian families – two mom's – two dads
- Children raised by grandparents or extended families

And so it's good for us to remember that words such as "family" and "parent" are not so much the configuration or make up of persons as much as they are an attitude, a value and a practice within groupings of people...

So today I think as many of you – of my own father – Albert Short – he died just over 10 years ago of a massive heart attack...quite suddenly and unexpectedly...

I have lots of memories for which I am thankful...

- For about five years when I was in high school and university – I worked each summer at Dofasco – Dominion Foundries and Steel – and on the same hours in the same building as my father and we drove together for work – stopped every morning for a Tim Horton's donut
- As we got older – I have two younger brothers – my father who was very much a soft hearted person modeled that it was appropriate for a man to have tears and be gentle
- Being a generous person – and someone who expressed his love in practical ways – when I moved away from home and would come back at times – for many years – he's slip me unbeknownst to my mom a \$20 – it was not so much I needed that as it was the act of giving it
- He volunteered and taught all of his sons the value and importance of supporting activities in the larger community – despite being busy he always did things for others – especially older people – often very concrete things
- He didn't drink any form of alcohol – when we were growing up I assumed it was a moral stance – when I asked him as a young person about that – he spoke of how he had an awareness he had of himself when he was a teen that if he drank – he might become an alcoholic so he made his choice based upon that premise
- He gave us rides everywhere and whenever we needed it – at any time of the day.
- He modeled for me very much the importance of a relationship to God and what it meant to be a person of faith. For him his faith was not expressed in theological discussions or sharing personally – but through a love of hymn singing, through his impeccable ethics and his commitment to service
- And...though his strong point was not conflict nor emotional issues nor talking about difficult topics (no birds and bees talks – just the book dropped on the bed every three years – a doctor talks to 9-12 year olds) in a time of great difficulty in my life – I remember his sitting across from me saying that if I was in trouble – he would drop everything and immediately be at my side no matter where I was or what difficulty I was in...

So I cherish as many of you will of your own memories – those ones today...

And of course – there were some things he didn't do ...

He grew up in a different time...

He never changed a diaper and upon each of our births – he dropped my mother off at the hospital and went home to wait for the Doctor's call...

...and he like all men have lived through a century of profound changes and struggles around the roles of men and women,
Expectations and dynamics...

The first diaper he changed in his live was his daughters’ Katy (and that was something to watch) and it’s another thing I admired about my father...

He didn’t do change well

And he did not always understand nor agree...he came from a very traditional family...

But he valued relationships and so with that – he grew and adapted...
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And I think that is another aspect of today which is important...

It is unrealistic I believe to expect...

That a mother or father can be all we need...or that family can be...

I can’t think of my mom on Mother’s Day – or my father on Father’s Day with out thinking about a whole lot of other people

Who have been really important in my life...

Who have been part of – what ever we call it – family...community...church

And it picks up for me that old adage – it does take a village to raise a child...

Different men and women over the years who have been and are mentors for me

And who I have learned...as I have learned from my parents – or have modeled
Very important things about being
Alive and human
And parenting....

And each of you who have those people in your life today...as well...

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You’ve probably figured out that I am not following the scripture lessons today and you would be right...

Something I don’t do often but my thoughts and prayers took me on some different paths this week...

I was in Ottawa again this week – my last trip I hope as I am giving up my military position as Deputy Area Chaplain of Land Forces Western Area – and the responsibility I had to supervise chaplains in Western Canada and to have to travel

To go back to being a Unit chaplain here in Vancouver...

So on the plane I was having a good read of the Globe and Mail and you may have seen The articles or seen it on the TV News about a time use study entitled

“Caught in the Time Crunch: Time Use, Leisure and Culture in Canada”

“The hours Canadians spend refreshing their minds and bodies through leisure and cultural activities – and moments shared with family – are being condensed and it’s affecting their well being.”

Globe and Mail Tues June 15, 2010

And it lists some of the current challenges:

- A 24 hour society and work day alongside of blackberries means we are more stressed, less rested and have less time to devote to our children, to leisure and cultural activities
- About 3 in 10 employed Canadians care for an elderly dependent and about 25 percent of seniors who require care are receiving it from a fellow senior
- The percent of teenagers who eat one meal a day with their parents plunged to 35% from 64% in 20 years
- 30% of Canadians work non standard working hours – on the increase
- More than 80% of 6-9 year olds are taking part in an organized extracurricular activity and at the same time spending more time in front of screens
- Canadians spend less time on social activities and only about 5% of Canadians engage in arts and culture activities

It connected with me for two reasons:

One was that I had been to Regent College a few weeks back for a continuing education course on leadership and we spent some time looking at biblical and Christian models of wholeness, health and well being and at Jesus as a person who had challenging life and ministry with all kinds of challenges and pressures and how did he prepare and care for himself...so that he could live fully and effectively...

And then the meeting that I was at in Ottawa was an After Action Seminar on Chaplaincy and Afghanistan – all of the chaplains who like myself had led a team during the Afghan deployment were there to look at what we had learned from this mission and could implement for military chaplaincy in terms of future mission Canadian Forces Chaplains might have...

And the group I worked with for the week look – spiritual wellness and resiliency...
How can chaplains keep themselves – spiritually, physically, mentally fit during really tough and challenging times...?

Now I am someone who does not get gets nostalgic about the “good old days” – because you can’t turn the clock back...

And when do that – I think is always with blinders on...

Things weren’t so busy in the good old days...may be true – but whatever those are – but then my mom had a ringer washer as well....so...

We don't get that luxury...and every generation – me, my dad, and my grandfather – you – we have the challenges that we have...and the life that we choose...

And so to face the challenges and take up the opportunities that come to us in life – I will use the military phrase – our spiritual resiliency or fitness has something to do with that...

Using a military model but also a church one – that fitness – like physical fitness is something we have to practice regularly...so that it is strong and available when those times of our life require ...

Total well being (Spiritual Resilience) Center for Spiritual Leadership – US ARMY CHAPLAIN CENTER AND SCHOOL FORT JACKSON SC

Total Well Being: has four aspects which are integrated and intertwined:

Our Spiritual Self:

- Our value system (ethics, moral compass, character, values, search for meaning and purpose, connection) – our relationship to God in Christ we would say as Christians

Our Physical Self (Parish Health Ministry)

- Nutrition, physical activity, sleep and other health related behaviors

Our Social Self

- Relationships to family, friends, community and the earth – nature, discover and explore those

Our Emotional Self

- Our emotional responses – joy, anger, stress and fear – how do we manage them
- Psychological outlook, sense of humor and self esteem
- Learning and studying

This is an integrated and entwined system...

One image to use to understand that is that of a wind chime...

When the wind blows. One chime hits another and as they connect, they make music together. Our wellness dimensions are like that – if there is growth in one area, it can ring through out our personal universe and improve others as well...

The spiritual dimension is very important because it is the one that often integrates the other components and through which growth happens...

Interesting to end with this inventory...ask you to turn with it...

So here are the guidelines

It's not a test – so you can't pass or fail.

It's your answers that are correct and try to be honest.

You are not passing it into me nor are you sharing it with others here today...

Though I'd be glad to meet with any of you to discuss it and see how you might make some movement....

Spiritual Wellness Inventory

The first step in making any kind of improvement in your life is awareness. The Spiritual Wellness Inventory will yield a score that gives you feedback about your spirituality at this point in time. This awareness will help you as you seek growth dimension of your life.

Read each question and answer according to how you really feel, not how you think you should answer the question.

Give yourself one point for every "yes" answer. Compare your answers to the chart below.

1. **I am willing to forgive myself and others** yes ____
no ____
2. **I have a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose in my life.** yes ____ no ____
3. **I have a belief system (such spiritual or religious)** yes ____ no ____
4. **I participate in regular spiritual activities with people share my beliefs and I am opening to hearing about others' beliefs.** yes ____ no ____
5. **I accept my limitations and without embarrassment or apology.** yes ____ no ____
6. **I keep the purpose of my life clearly in mind and let it guide my decision making.** yes ____ no ____
7. **I freely give to others.** yes ____ no ____
8. **I am comfortable about knowing things without precisely how I know them.** yes ____ no ____
9. **I allow others the freedom to believe what they want without pressuring them to accept my beliefs.**
yes ____ no ____
10. **I look and work toward balance.** yes ____ no ____
11. **I continually explore personal beliefs, values and priorities.** yes ____ no ____
12. **Principles, ethics and morals provide guides for my life.** yes ____ No ____

Total points	Rating	Comments
9 or more	Excellent	Your habits are enhancing your health.
6 to 8	Average	You are trying with room to improve.
5 or less	below average	There is room for improvement in your daily life

This is a simple inventory to help you gain an awareness of your current status of spiritual wellness. It consists of only

Yes and No answers, however. As you know, sometimes there are degrees in-between yes and no. Remember that there is always room for improvement even if you score high!

Developing Spiritual Wellness

A farmer hired a man to chop down some trees on the property. The first day, the woodchopper chopped down five trees. The farmer was pleased. The next day, the woodchopper chopped four times. The following day, only three trees were chopped down. The farmer approached the woodchopper and said "The first day you chopped five trees, now you are only chopping three. What happened? The woodchopper said "I could still chop down five trees a day, but my ax has become dull and I'm so busy that I don't have time to sharpen it.

We like the woodchopper, are often are often too busy to stop and sharpen our tools. Realizing the magnitude of benefits we derive from spiritual wellness, however we should take the time to sharpen our spiritual skills.

A regular routine of practicing three elements can be helpful:

- a) A quiet time for reflection, meditation or prayer
- b) Appropriate study or ethical, spiritual or religious material i.e. the bible, spiritual writers past or present
- c) Engaging in supportive friendships with others sharing similar spiritual goals and aspirations

The following activities practiced regularly, might help you to begin or continue your journey into spirituality. Pick a few that match who you are and practice them within a schedule that works for you. Its quality – not quantity

- **establish a regular time for meditation, reflection or prayer**
- **establish a peaceful place, free from distractions, for thinking about spiritual matters**
- **read books, search the internet or listen to audiotapes on subjects related to character development, ethics, morals or religion**
- **take a course at a local church, college, go to a library or take a home study course about matters important to you**
- **find a support group or network of people who have similar concerns or problems**
- **attend a spiritual or religious meeting**

- volunteer for a non-profit organization or your religious group
- focus on your relationships with family and friends and God
- discuss your spiritual growth with your religious leader, doctor, and counselor
- engage in learning new knowledge; master a new skill
- stand in the presence of nature to experience an overwhelming sense of beauty and awe
- participate in environmental activities such as recycling, proper disposal of hazardous materials, protecting helpless creatures or cleaning up an area in need
- find happiness in everyday occurrences and be practice being thankful to God for those
- appreciate lessons learned
- spend time with children, laugh with them, help them, and be amazed at them
- be open to being deeply touched by a song, a movie or news story
- mentor someone
- selected a valued personal characteristic (patience, forgiveness or compassion) and develop it
- write a song, a poem, an essay
- Journal your daily life, feeling and thoughts
- take up painting, drawing or some form of craft, art or hobby

***adapted from Spiritual Resilience Center for Spiritual Leadership US Army Chaplain School and Center Fort Jackson SC**

Take this home with you – think about one thing that you are doing now from the suggestions that you enjoy doing and keep doing it...

Find one thing you'd like to do – don't try to do everything at once tomorrow – that's a recipe for failure – and try to do that...

Blessings JIM