

Sunday morning

Well, what do you think? Not about the little things like the weather or the last Redhawks game or what we are going to have for lunch... What do you think about the big things – about God and life and death? The serious things.

What we are doing this Sunday morning is important – serious.

1. We sang a hymn of praise at the beginning of this service. The Bible says that God's **throne** is built by the praises of Israel. God came and listened as we sang of his grace and kindness.

The Bible visions God's throne being built and occupied whenever and wherever believers sing hymns of praise. What do you think of that!?

2. Then we confessed our sins and asked God to forgive us this morning. The Bible says that God **releases** us when we ask.
 - God does that by entering into our lives and taking our sin – here;
 - and God takes our hearts – here. *Use a rubber band here...*
 - Then God separates this sin [here] from us [here]. God separates that which binds us as far as the east is from the west.

God released us this morning. Then God said to us, "Go now, and sin no more."

What do you think of that!?

3. Then we heard God speak to us in the Word this morning; in the Word of God Jesus **embraces** us. Martin Luther said that the Word of God is a living thing with hands that reach for us and feet that run after us. Hands which lovingly reach for us...

Have you noticed how often hands need to be covered in disposable gloves in our world? I went to Subway and gloves were used, went to the Doctor and gloves were used.

There are so many nasty things in this world we need to be protected from. Even here in Church we have hand sanitizers available to be used before we serve Holy Communion. It is a part of our dirty world.

But Jesus embraces us this morning with no qualifications. The gloves are off. In the Word of God Jesus embraces you and me. That is the serious things of Sunday morning...

Monday morning

Last Monday morning, after having been before the throne of God, and having been released from my sins, and having been embraced by Jesus, I got on a plane in Fargo to fly to Chicago. The work week began...

We were 45 minutes late leaving the terminal gate. I loved it. Cell phones turned off and seatbelts tightened. It was a chance for me to begin reading the latest Harry Potter book with no interruptions. Who would like me to tell them how it ends?

I arrived at O'Hare about 110 pages into my book. I arrived at my hotel in downtown Chicago about 3 pages later in my book; only 3 pages.

Our shuttle driver was deceptively slow walking around the van. I read two pages in my Harry Potter book while he walked from the back of the van to the front.

But once he got behind the wheel there was a transformation: kind of like Clark Kent going into a telephone booth and Superman coming out. Faster than a speeding bullet we arrived downtown Chicago. We all profusely thanked our shuttle driver for allowing us to live another day!

The Churchwide Assembly did not begin for another 3 hours, so I walked the Magnificent Mile. It is described as one of the 10 most acclaimed avenues in the world: four shopping centers, world-renowned boutiques and locally acclaimed designers, a shopper's paradise.

I walked three blocks off of the Magnificent Mile on the way back to my hotel. What a difference three blocks makes. It was not so clean, not so nice, not so magnificent.

I walked those two miles and nobody said “hi!” to me. I said a few “hi’s!” to people who fleetingly met my eye. For every 5 “hi’s!” extended I would receive one back.

Then I rounded a corner and found a Kentucky Friend Chicken and an employee on the sidewalk saying. “You look hungry! This is your place! Come on in. We would love to serve you! The Colonel made this chicken recipe just for you!”

I was reminded of a story I once heard... A pastor, on vacation, visited a church. He was not greeted at the door, no one said “hi” to him when he sat down, he could count the smiles he saw throughout the service on one hand, and when he left no one invited him to come back.

After church he walked around the corner and stumbled upon the grand opening of a music store. He was greeted at the door and invited in. Countless people said “hi!” to him as he walked through the store. The music was lively; he was smiled at constantly. When he left, he was told by name that he was always welcome to come back again.

The pastor said, “I will not go back to that church. But I am thinking seriously about returning to that music store!”

That story I heard long ago came back to me as I entered the friendliest Kentucky Fried Chicken I have ever dined in!

What that Kentucky Fried Chicken offered to me on that Monday I hope you experience here on this Sunday. And what we have on Sunday morning I hope we share on Monday. But what is it that we can share with the world?

I went back to my hotel and read the text for this Sunday morning. It comes from the 12th chapter of Luke’s Gospel. The whole chapter is about Jesus and the Monday life. Luke 12 tells us three things to bring with us into our everyday life.

1. On Monday morning: Fear God!

Verse 5 says: “Save your fear for God, who holds your entire life—body and soul—in his hands.” [Luke 12:5 the Message] Jesus calls us to fear God.

Everybody has a story that begins like this: as a youth I made a mistake.

- We may have told a lie: we said we were putting some money into our savings account for college but we secretly spent it on a new album.
- We may have been careless: we were waving to an appealing member of the opposite sex while driving, and we ran into the back of the car in front of us.

At some point we might have felt some stirring of remorse and regret. But we lived with those feelings.

Then Dad found out. For many of us growing up there was a sense of fear of Dad. Dad was bigger than us and stronger than us, and for my generation he was the disciplinarian. Now if you had a good Dad two things happened.

- Dad held us accountable. EX: We put more money into savings or we worked off our debt for having the car fixed.
- Dad continued to accept us. That is, Dad still called us son or daughter, and still gave to us all the gifts of his house.

We realized that, as the Bible says, “*perfect love casts out fear.*” [I John 4:18] We realized why Martin Luther says, “*We are to fear and love God.*” So the first thing we bring into Monday morning is fearing – and loving – God.

2. On Monday morning: Depend on God!

Verse 28 says: “*God will certainly care for you.*” [Luke 12:28]

In 1957 power was turned on at 1816 17th Street South. A 60 amp service allowed the power to flow: lights went on and water was heated and clothes were washed and radio’s and tv’s did there thing.

But through the years things were added. Washer and dryer and air-conditioning and more TV's and computers and more lights... A new panel with 200 amps of power went in at 1816 17th St S this week. Now we trust the power in our house.

"God will certainly care for you." [Luke 12:28] There is a power in those words that you and I can depend on.

In 1953 I was baptized. A source of power flowed into my life; a dependable source of power. And unlike the power in my house, this power is always sufficient.

You can depend on God tomorrow morning to help you have patience with the kids, wisdom for your job, and strength for whatever challenges you face. On Monday depend on God.

3. On Monday morning: Expect God to Act!

Verse 35 says: *"Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning."* [Luke 12:35]

In a book I learned this truth:

- If I look for bad things to happen on Monday, I will find them. Bad things are always happening in this broken world. And that is what will fill my day: bad things.
- If I look for good things to happen on Monday, I will find them. God things are always happening in this world that God created. That is what will fill my day.

You know that truth. We just needed to be reminded of that once in a while. And we need to be reminded of this as well: If we do not expect God to act, we will not see what God does.

Here is an embarrassing illustration of that truth from my life. In our house the windows get washed, the clothes get ironed, the plants get watered, and just a multitude of other things happen on a daily basis.

For about 30 years I thought we had household elves. I thought these things got done automatically while we were sleeping.

But then I was informed one day that these things get done by – whom? Yeah; in our case, Jan.

Miraculous things happen all around us all the time. God is at work. But if we do not expect God to be active, we might think it is just luck or chance or happenstance.

So this week: expect God to act. And be ready to act for God with your lamps lit; be servant ready.

Do this as a closing:

- Say Sunday morning and breathe in...
- Say Monday morning and breath out...

Let us pray: Lord God, come and fill us on this Sunday morning. Fill us with praises which build your throne here this morning; fill us with gratitude for the way you release from our burdens; fill us with strength from the way you embrace us with your presence.

And Lord God, let us bring these gifts with us to our daily lives. May we walk this week fearing and loving our God. May we depend on you when we meet detours and deadends. And may we walk with open eyes seeing and giving thanks for your work in our world this week. Amen.