

"A Leap of Fun" Sermon Notes

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First Church of East Hartford on November 16, 2014

A few years ago, my brother Eric decided to go skydiving.

They wouldn't send a plane up for just him, so he needed a buddy to go skydiving with him.

Guess who he picked? [me]

I made a pros and cons list: adventure, great fb pictures, bonding with bro vs. possible death.

Eventually I decided it was a once in a lifetime opportunity worth taking.

I was cool through the whole training.

[legs up as soon as you are out of the plane]

I was cool going up in the little plane,

we sat huddled on the floor, my bro & the two professionals with us taking funny videos

Then I watched my brother inch towards the edge and fall on out.

Zoom. He whipped away.

I was terrified.

"This is crazy!" I thought, "What on earth am I doing?"

I hardly had time to finish my thought,

because the trainer who was attached to me was slowly pushing me towards the edge
and before I knew what was happening, I was falling out of the plane.

Here is the crazy thing, it didn't turn my stomach the way roller coasters do.

The speed of the plane was so much, that my speed falling wasn't that much faster -
so my body didn't feel a huge shift in speed,
so my stomach didn't drop.

but I dropped.

And then the parachute went up.

and then, some gorgeous views of the beaches below-

I felt like a bird floating over the world.

It was incredible.

You have probably heard the phrase, "a leap of faith"

Well skydiving was a leap of fun.

AND, I am going to argue that a leap of fun is congruent with a leap of faith.

When we take a leap of fun, we can strengthen our faith.

Skydiving can be a leap of fun - literally leaping.

It is also a leap in the sense of mustering the courage to do something that is scary,
but ultimately fun or at least worthwhile.

In that sense a leap of fun could be asking someone to dance, trying a new place, or hiking an unfamiliar trail.

A leap of fun could also be choosing to do something fun,

even though the 6 o'clock news tells us plenty of things to despair about.

As the comic on the bulletin cover points to,

there are plenty of reasons to stop dancing, but Snoopy keeps on going.

Snoopy is proclaiming the Gospel.

When we have fun, we are proclaiming the Gospel message.

Having fun, laughing and joking, makes the statement that the world is not all gloom.

A core message of the Christian faith is that death and despair don't have the last word.

Jesus did not stay dead on the cross.

He rose.

As an Easter people we proclaim that death and despair don't have the final word.

When we have fun we assert there is enough goodness in the world worth celebrating.

This doesn't mean we don't cry or grieve or lament the tragedies that befall us.

It is not ultimately helpful to squash our feelings and pretend to be happy when we are not.

Good Friday is part of the Christian story too

Good Friday times are another place where faith comes in:

faith can come from those times when our mourning is turned to dancing.

For many people, faith is born in the moments when help is most needed,

when the bank account has run dry,

or the addiction comes creeping back,

or we lose a loved one we held dear.

Many of the psalms sing about such moments.

In Psalm 30, which we read this morning,

the psalmist proclaims how he was down and out,

he had hit the bottom of the barrel,

and his enemies were looming over him ready take everything he had,

and in that moment,

God lifted him up and took him out of the grave.

God gave him another life and established him anew.

Jesus continues to do this through the church.

In our own congregation, the church lifts people up when life has thrown a curve ball (or two):

Through the food bank we provide food to those who hungry

- some just need it for a little while, others are stuck for longer

Through the EH Interfaith Ministries we help EH residents with energy bills.

Deaconesses bring flowers, cards, & loving words to those who are ill, grieving or homebound.

In our annual toy drive children throughout EH get a visit from Santa

Every summer our teenagers help build up a home for someone in need

The preschool housed in our building supports children who may not otherwise receive pre-school.

What is harder to put into an annual report of budget narrative is the way we support one another through illness, divorce, and losses.

As a congregation,

we follow Jesus, the head of the church, in being there in the Good Friday moments,

and sticking with it until we get to Easter.

Sometimes we are the skydiving instructor,

inching a loved one over the edge into the joy of Easter.

And, we are pretty good at being Easter people celebrating and having fun together.

[point to balloons with "fun times" written on them]

This morning we have lifted up a great many ways that we have fun,

as a church and as individuals.

When we have fun we assert that there is something to be joyful about,

that there is some goodness in the world

- that Jesus truly did conquer evil and despair and brought about an Easter joy.

During our time of offering,
you are invited to have a leap of fun and join in a celebration dance party.

Today we celebrate:

we celebrate the ways this church lifts people up in the midst of great need
we celebrate the fun times we have had
we celebrate the ongoing commitment so many of you have made
to support the work of this faith community.

You are invited to celebrate the chance to not only be a part of this community,
but the opportunity to help support this community.

You can bring forward your pledge cards -

celebrating your commitment to provide consistent support to the workings of this ministry.

You can bring forward your regular Sunday offering -

celebrating the ability to give financially this week

You can bring forward a welcome card with your name filled out -

celebrating your presence in this community -
the most valuable gift you can give.

Let's Celebrate!