

Psalm 1  
September 11, '11

"FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH"

THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS THAT AUTOMATICALLY GO TOGETHER.

AS THE OLD SONG TELLS US, THERE'S "LOVE & MARRIAGE" AND "HORSE & CARRIAGE."

WE KNOW THERE ARE THE OBVIOUS FOODS THAT GO TOGETHER, LIKE "PEANUT BUTTER & JELLY,"  
"BACON & EGGS," "PORK & BEANS."

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO GO TOGETHER – "LAUREL & HARDY," "SIMON & GARFUNKEL," "BERT & ERNIE."

THERE ARE ALSO SOME THINGS THAT *DON'T* GO TOGETHER.

THERE ARE THE OBVIOUS THINGS LIKE "DRINKING & DRIVING," AND "OIL & WATER."

PEOPLE WERE ASKED TO GIVE SUGGESTIONS OF SUCH THINGS.

SOME OF THE ANSWERS THEY OFFERED ARE INTRIGUING.

"NECKTIES & RADIATOR FANS" WAS SUGGESTED BY ONE PERSON.

SOMEONE ELSE – MORE THAN LIKELY A PARENT OF SMALL CHILDREN – OFFERED, "WHITE T-SHIRTS &  
RED BKOOOL-AID."

HERE'S ONE THAT I FOUND MOST INTRIGUING OF ALL – "ALCOHOL & CHURCH."

THE RESPONDENT CHOSE TO ADD A TWO-WORD COMMENTARY – "TRUST ME."

I DON'T THINK I WANT TO KNOW THE REST OF THAT STORY!

BUT, JUST AS THERE ARE THINGS THAT *DO* GO WELL TOGETHER & THINGS THAT *DON'T* GO WELL  
TOGETHER, THERE ARE ALSO SOME THINGS THAT – AT FIRST GLANCE – WOULDN'T SEEM TO GO TOGETHER, AND  
YET REALLY DO.

HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED AT A LIST OF SINGERS WHO SANG WITH PAVAROTTI?

IT'S ASTOUNDING!

THERE WERE THE OBVIOUS OPERA SINGING PARTNERS.

BUT HOW ABOUT BONO OF U2, MEATLOAF & JAMES BROWN?!

SOMEHOW, SURPRISINGLY, IT WORKS!

ALL OF THIS BRINGS US TO TODAY.

THIS IS A SPECIAL DAY.

IT'S A SPECIAL DAY FOR SEVERAL REASONS & WHENEVER THERE'S MORE THAN ONE REASON FOR A  
SUNDAY TO BE SPECIAL IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH, IT IS A CAUSE FOR ANXIETY FOR THOSE OF US WHO PLAN  
WORSHIP SERVICES.

WHERE IS THE EMPHASIS PLACED?

WHAT GETS SHORT-CHANGED?

WHAT GETS LEFT OUT?

IT'S ALWAYS A DILEMMA ON A DAY SUCH AS THIS.

TODAY MARKS – NOT JUST THE WEEK OF – BUT THE VERY DAY OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF ONE OF THE DARKEST DAYS IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

TODAY ALSO IS A DAY DESIGNATED AS “GRANDPARENTS’ DAY.”

FOR US AT EASTMINSTER, TODAY IS ALSO FALL KICK-OFF – THE DAY WE BEGIN A NEW YEAR IN OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL & CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM.

ALL THREE ARE SPECIAL – BUT HOW MIGHT THE THREE BE LINKED TOGETHER?

THEY AREN’T THREE THINGS THAT *OBVIOUSLY* GO TOGETHER, NOR ARE THEY NECESSARILY THREE THINGS THAT *OBVIOUSLY DON’T* GO TOGETHER.

BUT IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THE THREE MIGHT BE LIKE PAVAROTTI SINGING WITH THE KING OF SOUL – “THIS IS A MAN’S WORLD” – JAMES BROWN?

MIGHT THERE BE AN UNLIKELY CONNECTION THAT JUST HAPPENS TO WORK?

I THINK THERE IS.

LET’S TAKE A LOOK AT THE THREE & SEE WHAT THAT CONNECTION IS.

FIRST, THE EVENT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW SIMPLY AS 9-11.

WE’VE BEEN INUNDATED WITH STORIES ABOUT IT OVER THE PAST 2 WEEKS & I DON’T REALLY CARE TO ADD TO THAT SATURATION, BUT THERE ARE A COUPLE THINGS I’D LIKE TO MENTION ABOUT IT.

ON THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup> TEN YEARS AGO – SEPTEMBER 16, 2001 – THE SERMON THAT WAS PREACHED FROM THIS PULPIT OPENED WITH THESE WORDS –

*“WHENEVER THERE IS AN EVENT OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE I ALWAYS HAVE TWO THOUGHTS REGARDING THAT EVENT’S INCLUSION IN WORSHIP.*

*THE FIRST ONE IS, ‘PEOPLE ARE PROBABLY EXHAUSTED FROM HEARING ABOUT THIS & WE NEED TO DIRECT OUR THOUGHTS ELSEWHERE.’*

*VERY QUICKLY, THOUGH, ESPECIALLY WITH THE CURRENT CRISIS, THAT THOUGHT IS SUPPLANTED BY THIS ONE: ‘BUT THIS IS WHERE WE NEED TO HEAR ABOUT IT MORE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE.’*

*WHERE ELSE BUT THE CHURCH CAN WE PUT THINGS IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE?*

*WHERE ELSE BUT THE CHURCH CAN WE FIND THE SUSTENANCE THAT WE NEED IN A TIME SUCH AS THIS?*

*WHERE ELSE BUT THE CHURCH DO WE TURN WHEN OUR EMOTIONS ARE SO SCATTERED – WHEN WE’RE RIDDLED WITH FEELINGS OF PAIN, SORROW, CONFUSION, ANGER, HELPLESSNESS, FEAR, DESPAIR, DISBELIEF, GUILT – AND WHEN ALL OF THOSE FEELINGS TUG AT US AT THE SAME TIME?”*

ON THAT DAY, HERE – AS IN NEARLY EVERY CHURCH IN AMERICA – OUR PEWS WERE FILLED.

OUR ATTENDANCE THAT DAY WAS HIGHER THAN IT HAD BEEN SINCE EASTER.

IT WASN’T SURPRISING.

IN TIMES OF CRISIS, WE WANT AN ANCHOR.

WE WANT ANSWERS. WE WANT SECURITY.

WE WANT SOMETHING TO CLING TO – SOMETHING TO HOLD ONTO.

WE WANT SOMETHING THAT WILL GIVE US STABILITY.

WE WANT A FOUNDATION AND THERE'S NO BETTER PLACE TO FIND THAT FOUNDATION THAN IN OUR FAITH.

IN ADDITION TO THIS BEING THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF 9-11, IT IS ALSO "GRANDPARENTS' DAY."

GRANDPARENTS' DAY FALLS INTO THE SAME CATEGORY AS LABOR DAY WITH SOME OF THE THINGS WE TALKED ABOUT LAST SUNDAY.

IT DOESN'T GET A LOT OF FANFARE & CAN EASILY SLIP BY, UNNOTICED & UNACKNOWLEDGED.

BUT IT IS A NATIONAL HOLIDAY.

SO DESIGNATED IN 1978, THE SUNDAY AFTER LABOR DAY IS ALWAYS GRANDPARENTS' DAY.

THERE IS CERTAINLY SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR OBSERVING THIS DAY IN THE CHURCH.

GRANDPARENTS TODAY PROBABLY HAVE A MORE VITAL INFLUENCE ON THEIR GRANDCHILDREN THAN THEY HAVE HAD IN MANY YEARS.

THERE ARE A VARIETY OF REASONS FOR THIS.

THE VALUES AND DEMANDS OF TODAY'S SOCIETY OFTEN LEAVE YOUNG CHILDREN WITHOUT A STABILIZING INFLUENCE IN THEIR LIVES & GRANDPARENTS CAN FILL THAT VOID.

GRANDPARENTS PROVIDE A PERSPECTIVE THAT A CHILD'S PARENTS DON'T YET HAVE.

THEY CAN PROVIDE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE & BOUNDLESS ENCOURAGEMENT IN A WAY THAT'S DIFFERENT FROM WHAT A CHILD'S PARENTS CAN GIVE.

IN A DAY & AGE WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE "EROSION OF FAMILY," GRANDPARENTS CAN PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION THAT IS SO DESPERATELY NEEDED IN THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF A YOUNG PERSON.

THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ROLE OF GRANDPARENTS WHEN HE WROTE A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS PROTÉGÉ TIMOTHY, SAYING, "*I AM REMINDED OF YOUR SINCERE FAITH, A FAITH THAT FIRST DWELT IN YOUR GRANDMOTHER, LOIS, AND YOUR MOTHER EUNICE, AND NOW, I'M SURE, DWELLS IN YOU.*"

THE PASSING OF A FOUNDATION IN FAITH FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER IS VITALLY IMPORTANT IN OUR LIVES – PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING ELSE WE CAN OFFER SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS.

NOT ONLY IS TODAY THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF 9-11 & GRANDPARENTS' DAY – IT IS ALSO, HERE AT EASTMINSTER, FALL KICK-OFF.

TODAY IS THE DAY THAT OUR NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES BEGIN.

IT'S ALWAYS AN EXCITING & SPECIAL DAY IN THE CHURCH.

WE TAKE GREAT DELIGHT HERE IN THE STRENGTH OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM.

IT IS RARE IN THIS DAY & AGE TO HAVE A PROGRAM AS STRONG AS OURS IS.

LET ME OFFER YOU A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM.

IF YOU'VE ALWAYS MADE SUNDAY SCHOOL PART OF YOUR REGULAR SUNDAY ROUTINE - GREAT! KEEP IT UP!

IF YOU WENT IN THE PAST, BUT STOPPED GOING AT SOME POINT (MAYBE EVEN WHEN YOU BECAME A TEEN-AGER!), I ENCOURAGE YOU TO TRY IT AGAIN.

THE CLASSES WE'RE OFFERING THIS YEAR – EVERY ONE OF THEM – PROMISES TO BE ENLIGHTENING, CHALLENGING & ENJOYABLE.

YOU HAVE A MUCH GREATER OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY IN SUNDAY SCHOOL THAN YOU DO IN WORSHIP.

IN SUNDAY SCHOOL, THERE'S MORE OF AN OPPORTUNITY TO DELVE DEEPLY INTO SCRIPTURE & DEEPLY INTO ISSUES OF LIFE AND FAITH.

IN SUNDAY SCHOOL, YOU'LL FIND THAT YOUR FOUNDATION OF FAITH IS DEEPLY ROOTED & IS GIVEN THE CHANCE TO GROW & DEVELOP AND IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW OLD OR HOW YOUNG YOU ARE TO HAVE THAT GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT TAKE PLACE.

SO NOW WE'VE TAKEN A LOOK AT THE THREE AREAS OF EMPHASIS FOR TODAY – THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF 9-11, GRANDPARENTS' DAY & FALL KICK-OFF.

THERE STILL MAY NOT SEEM TO BE MUCH OF A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE THREE.

BUT I THINK OUR SCRIPTURE READING THIS MORNING – THE FIRST PSALM – CAN HELP ESTABLISH THAT CONNECTION.

THIS PSALM IS PLACED AT THE BEGINNING FOR A REASON.

IT NOT ONLY OPENS THE ENTIRE BOOK OF PSALMS – IT SETS FORTH THE ENTIRE BOOK AS A CONTRAST BETWEEN TWO WAYS OF LIVING.

THERE'S THE WAY OF THE WISE & THE WAY OF THE FOOLISH.

WHAT IS SAID HERE IS THAT THE TWO CAN BE DISTINGUISHED RATHER EASILY.

THE WISE ARE THOSE WHO, LIKE TREES, HAVE THEIR ROOTS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED.

THOSE WHO ARE FOOLISH ARE LIKE CHAFF - BLOWN ABOUT BY THE WINDS OF CHANGE THAT COME & GO.

PERHAPS THIS DISTINCTION IS INSTRUCTIVE AS WE LOOK AGAIN AT WHAT WE'VE SAID ABOUT THE THREE OBSERVANCES TODAY.

THERE WAS ONE COMMON DENOMINATOR THAT WE MENTIONED IN ALL THREE.

WE USED THE PHRASE "FOUNDATION OF FAITH" WITH EACH OF THEM.

IN TIMES OF CRISIS – BE IT PERSONAL OR NATIONAL – WE LONG FOR A "FOUNDATION OF FAITH" THAT WILL ENABLE US TO WITHSTAND THE CHAOS & THE TURMOIL.

AS YOUNG CHILDREN GROW & MATURE, THEY NEED THE "FOUNDATION OF FAITH" THAT GRANDPARENTS CAN OFFER.

AS WE LOOK AT OUR OWN SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WE NEED THE "FOUNDATION OF FAITH" THAT SUNDAY SCHOOL PROVIDES.

IN THE LETTER OF JAMES, WE ARE GIVEN A GREAT IMAGE OF THOSE WHO LIVE WITHOUT THAT  
“FOUNDATION OF FAITH.”

HE SAYS THEY ARE “WAVES OF THE SEA, DRIVEN & TOSSED BY THE WIND.”

WHAT WE ALL DESPERATELY LONG FOR IS SOMETHING TO ANCHOR US – SOMETHING WE CAN HANG  
ONTO - SOMETHING WE CAN CLING TO – SOMETHING THAT WILL PROVIDE STABILITY THROUGH ALL THE STORMS  
OF LIFE.

THERE IS NOTHING THAT PROVIDES THAT MORE THAN THE TIE THAT BINDS US TOGETHER.

THAT TIE IS OUR “FOUNDATION OF FAITH.” AMEN.

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