



Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

May 28, 2009

“Honey,” Wendy said, “Would you and the boys clean up the back yard this morning? It’s getting a little out of hand, and I’d like it to look better.”

Now, as Saturday morning chores go, that’s not a bad draw. It’s outside (the weather was nice). It’s not particularly hard. And it’s outside the immediate vicinity of Wendy’s watchful eye (always a bonus). Most importantly, it would not take all day.

“Sure, sweetie,” I happily replied, confident that the boys and I would be playing golf that afternoon – with ease (actually Ben was sort of little, so mostly he rode in the cart) while Andrew and I played. I rounded up the boys, pried the Play Station controls from their fingers, and told them if we got after this thing, we’d hit the links in a couple of hours.

“Dad, when did you last see our back yard?” they asked. I couldn’t recall, so I just said, “How bad can it be?” How bad, indeed.

The only way I could describe the way our back yard looked is this: it was a cross between a bad Jeff Foxworthy redneck joke and a Sanford & Son rerun. It was bad. An epic mess. At the time we had two Labrador retrievers who claimed and maimed any and everything so unlucky as to venture into or be left in said backyard. We don’t have time or space for the list of things that were chewed into miniscule pieces, nor to describe the volume of “land mines” the puppies had deposited.

I gave the boys some work gloves, a list of things to do, and then reminded them to take their shoes off before going back inside the house. We set about returning furniture to the deck, figuring out how two cute little puppies could eat a cast iron grill, picking up balls, shoes, rags, string, pieces of trim from the house and much more – all of which had been partially eaten by the two demons.

From time to time I'd look around and one or both of the boys would be gone. First I found Benjamin in his room sorting his Babe Ruth baseball cards (he has a zillion of them). It wasn't hard to track him because he hadn't taken off his shoes. I could have followed him blindfolded.

"What are you doing?"

"Sorting my cards and putting them in the notebooks. Just like you asked."

"BB, I asked you to do that three weeks ago! C'mon!"

*"So you *don't* want the cards sorted?"*

"Not right now. You have a bigger job to do. Now, please come join Andrew and me in the backyard."

Only Andrew was no longer in the backyard. "Ben you get back to it and I'll round up Andrew."

Andrew had begun playing with the two dogs who were tied up in the front yard.

"Hey bud. I thought we were cleaning the back yard."

"We were until you and Benjamin quit on me. I decided to do something else."

"Well, we're back at it, so come join us."

So together we began again what turned out to be about a four hour job of "unrednecking" our yard. There were a couple more times when I had to encourage the boys to get back on track, but for the most part they stayed focused on doing what Mom had set before the three of us to do.

When we open the Biblical book called "Acts" we find a small, inexperienced young church that had been called to an enormous task – making disciples of all people. Acts 2 begins with Pentecost Day, when God gave the church His Holy Spirit. Among other things, the Spirit gives the church the power to accomplish His mission, and keeps the church focused on the mission itself. One man is called the Holy Spirit, "the shy member of the Trinity" because the Spirit's job is not to promote himself, but to promote Jesus, his death, his resurrection, his gospel – and to keep the church focused on sharing that good news. The Spirit's role is, in part, to point to Jesus – and to keep us doing the same thing.

It is easy for the church to get caught up in doing a lot of good and important things – but at the same time neglect the main thing. Pentecost reminds us that from day one of the church's existence it was the Holy Spirit that pushed, prodded and empowered Christians to tell the good news that Jesus died for us and rose again. You and I have but one message: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." We have

but one mission: to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” Let’s be sure to help each other stay at our god-given mission.

I went inside to get a drink, but was sure only to be gone a couple of minutes. When I came back outside, Ben looked up at me:

“I’ve got my eye on the ball, dad.”

“Good job, Benjamin. Good job.”

How do we know when a Christian or when a church is being led by God’s Spirit and not some other spirit? There are actually several ways to tell (explore the letter of 1 John to see most of them), but one most surely is this: a church that is being led by God’s Holy Spirit is a church that keeps the main thing the main thing.

Pax Christi,

Randy

Reminders for Sunday, May 31

---8:15am Elders' meeting

---1 – 3pm Farewell Reception / Lunch for Rev. Reeda Allen,
Aberdeen Clubhouse, 4550 Westminster Lane, Suwanee

---5pm Youth grades 5 – 12 Summer Kick-off swim party at the
Greens'

---Overnight Youth Lock-in at JCCC