

2015 Saskatchewan Prayer Breakfast Address

Wednesday April 15, 2015

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Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honor to be here, to be a part of a tradition that goes back so many years. In order to tell you my story, you have to understand my personality. I like to have fun, joke around, be a bit silly. So to understand my story ... you are going to have to laugh a little bit this morning. And that's ok. The good Lord gifts us in different ways. Can I get an Amen?

I came here with my men's group about 4 years ago, and I came a bit late ... this is what they did – they put me behind the pillar over there. So to everyone behind a pillar shout out to you!

I am a sinner!

I've lied.

I've been jealous of other people's success.

I've been envious of others.

I saw some of you in this room calling me, but I ignored your call because you're long winded.

I've dropped a hot dog on the floor and put it back in the pile only to hope that no one ate it.

I've stolen money from the bank ... while playing Monopoly.

I told my son it was ok to pee in the pool because I was too lazy to take him out.

I've nodded off at church and looked around to see if anyone saw me.

I've stolen and eaten grapes at Safeway.

I've told someone they looked great in that outfit ... when they did NOT look great in that outfit.

I have pretended to be asleep, so that my kids would go away.

I have overreacted to situations ... and I have made light of serious situations.

I've blamed everyone else but myself.

I've tried to make a "deal" with God that sounds like this: God if you do THIS for me, I will do THIS ...

I have had little faith, shaky faith, or no faith.

I have been upset AT God.

I AM A SINNER ...

I know what you're thinking right now ... You've also ... stolen from the bank in Monopoly.

I grew up the oldest of 6. I grew up Catholic, and that just meant I went to church on Sundays. We went to the Spanish Mass ... and I didn't speak Spanish. I fell into that thinking that since I went to church, I must be good. I didn't develop a foundation or a relationship with the Lord.

I found out early that I was good at all sports. It was my respite – the court or the field – your parent's success didn't follow you there. And I excelled! I was first team all-state football player. It earned me a scholarship to play in University and I became an All-American.

So I had NO foundation for the Lord ... everyone in my life was telling me how great I am ...oh, and couple that with me being 17-21 years old.

I made some mistakes – lots of mistakes.

What young person doesn't make mistakes? The difference was I KNEW I was wrong. I felt God trying to reach me. I heard the whisper in the back of my head, but I didn't want to hear it.

Have you ever intentionally shut God out of your life?

And that's the way my life went. I was just going through life with one set-back after another.

My Uncle Lee gave me something to think about: he told me, "God is with you all day, every day."

God was trying to reach me ... until 2003. I was playing for the Riders, and midway through the season, things were not going like I had expected.

Rod Sawatzky provided some inspiration for me. He told me,

"God loves you. Before you were even born, He loved you."

"You are forgiven if you repent and have taken God as your Lord and Saviour."

"God has used all kinds of people for good ... for His purposes."

This was what I needed to hear.

I have not gone through all of this alone. My wife Jennifer has been faithfully by my side for 12 years, through sickness and in health, for richer or poorer – a lot of "poorer" ... She has been with me through my struggle to find out who I am as a man, and where I am with my faith. She props me up when I need propping; she brings me down when I get to high on myself.

Babe, your guidance, forgiveness, patience, and love is how I know I am blessed. I thank God I can walk in this world with you as my wife. I love you.

I have found that a lot of my biggest mistakes and worst decisions in life have happened when my faith was shaky, when I didn't know if God was with me. It seemed easier to mess up and to make those bad decisions when my faith was in doubt.

There has been a passage of scripture that has helped me understand my struggle. I am not a pastor or a priest. I'm about 8 years from a Theology Degree. I am just a guy who likes this passage. I would like to read it to you and tell you how it has affected me in my journey. This is my personal interpretation.

Jesus Calms the storm: the Book of Mark, chapter 4, verses 35-41

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

There are the three things I take from this passage:

1. It is said that "there were other boats with him." When you are in your personal storm, aren't there others in your life who are affected – friends and family? They go through your struggle as well.
2. Jesus slept on the boat. With a storm brewing, he slept. The Bible says the sleep of a believer will be sweet and peaceful because he knows the Lord is with him. In Proverbs chapter 3, verse 24, we read "If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet." In Psalms chapter 4, verse 8, the scripture states, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Have you ever stayed awake at night worrying about this or that? Worrying about the plans that you have made ...
3. The final thing about this passage that is important is that when the storm hits ... it's really good to have Jesus in your boat. Is Jesus in your boat?

The Apostles' lack of faith reminded me that even those who lived and walked with Jesus, saw His miracles, and heard His message, still found it difficult to be a hundred percent faith-filled all the time!

We also have to get past this notion that once we declare we are living for the Lord, that our lives are going to be all sunshine with no storms. I would argue that once you declare God as your saviour, storms pop up. Even the scripture warns us in John chapter 16, verse 33: "I have said

these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

He has promised that He will be with us in the storm, and through perseverance and faith we will overcome.

In Deuteronomy chapter 31, verse 8, we read, “It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

The passage found in James chapter 1, verse 12, states, “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

Yes, I am a Sinner:

Do you know how difficult it is to get on your knees and beg for forgiveness ... when you don't have good knees?

I have repented; I have prayed for forgiveness. I feel the love again. I feel forgiven. My faith is much stronger than it has been in a very long time.

As you leave here today just know that the storms are coming, the worry may return, but we believe in the Creator and He believes in us. He has promised to be with us through anything that may come up. If my life is any indication to you, we cannot have testimony without tests.

AMEN

Thank You for letting me come and speak to you about my personal journey!

God Bless