

“Sabbath”

The Rev. Drew Willard  
Church on the Square  
July 22, 2012

Good morning!

I am Pastor Drew Willard of the UCC at The Villages  
and we are located on CR 101,  
one mile north of the intersection with CR 466.

Let me open my talk to you today by acknowledging  
the tragic event of senseless killings in Aurora, Colorado...  
This is a national tragedy and a disgrace.

I don't know what other churches are planning in the way of a memorial,  
but we will hold a candlelight prayer vigil next Sunday at 7:00 pm  
and you are all welcome to attend.

Let us pray... O God,  
We remember the 12 people who died, the 59 people who were injured  
those people who survived and escaped and are still traumatized,  
the people of Aurora, of Colorado, of our country and of our world.  
We pray for them and for ourselves and  
ask you to help us begin to work to prevent this from happening again.  
May true heroism arise in the days and weeks to come  
as the people of Aurora pick up the pieces of their lives.  
May they not lose their faith – may they find it.  
In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

I am not convinced that violent films are guiltless in this situation,  
but they seem to serve younger generations as kind of a fairytale  
which are often violent like 'The 3 Little Pigs' for example –  
and such traditional fairytales generally have served  
to help children deal with the frightening realities of life.  
Heroes function to remind us of creative alternatives in a world that  
seems to live only by the law of 'survival of the fittest'.

Christ is a heroic figure – though as Christians, we believe that  
what's written about him is true and he's not just a literary character.  
Jesus gives us insight to the character of God  
as one who heals blindness and paralysis, who feeds the hungry,  
who speaks truth to power and casts out devils.  
The narrative I will share with you today is about a day in the life of Christ,  
a day filled with wonders which happens to be a Sabbath...

We church folk talk a lot about ethics and morality  
but somehow the conversation skips over

- poverty – not just economic, but spiritual, too;
- mental illness – from depression to insanity; and
- violence against the vulnerable –  
from casual slurs to domestic abuse.

These are the big 3 social evils that need to be addressed by people of faith.

When are we going to start talking about these things  
and how can we begin to work together to overcome them?

## “Sabbath: A Day in The Life of Christ”

The Rev. Drew Willard  
Church on The Square,  
The Villages, FL  
July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012

Mark 2:23-5:43

Today’s Gospel lesson is from Mark 2-5 which tells about  
a day in the life of Christ which happens to be a Sabbath day.

And what a day it is...

It began with Jesus and his disciples on their way to the synagogue  
at Capernaum.

When the disciples pluck heads of grain  
for a 1<sup>st</sup> Century “drive thru” breakfast,  
religious experts tell Jesus they are breaking the Sabbath laws.

When Jesus heals someone in the presence of the Capernaum congregation,  
they’re infuriated and they go to work on the Sabbath  
to plot against Jesus – just a little irony there.

And on the following morning – no longer the Sabbath,  
the same people from the Capernaum synagogue  
are waiting for Jesus on the beach  
because their leader’s daughter is dying.

And without a word of protest, Jesus heals the child;  
And did you notice it ends as it all began – with food,  
when Jesus says, “Give her something to eat.”

Healing illness and feeding the hungry  
were considered to be violations of the Sabbath laws –  
yet plotting revenge was not.

Sad, isn’t it, when people turn a blind eye to what is good  
just to prove they’re right.

But a number of people from that Capernaum synagogue  
had a change of heart – and that is the main theme  
of what this cycle of stories is about.

It is about keeping your heart open to affirm what is good  
while opposing evil – and being able to tell the difference.

It is about not hardening your heart to conform to social prejudice,  
but trying to live an authentic life now – which is what eternal life is,  
and preparing your heart for heaven.

Willard, p. 2

It is about being yourself – now, ‘on earth as [you will be] in heaven’  
by integrating the in-ternal world of your heart  
with the e-ternal world yet to come,  
without being deformed by the ex-ternal world’s prejudices...  
And Jesus models this by taking us along with his disciples  
on a day that is filled with adventure, conflict, and discovery.

Have you ever had a day like that? I don’t mean when you were so busy  
that you lamented there were only 24 hours in a day  
because you couldn’t get everything done  
to please your boss, your teacher, your family, or yourself.  
But I’m talking about a day so filled with wonders that you  
just couldn’t pack one more thing into it.

Perhaps it was the day you met the person who would become  
your partner or spouse.

Perhaps it was the day your first child was born  
or when your child first left home to go to school or pursue a career.

Perhaps it was a day you were told you had a diagnosis from a physician  
that challenged you to fight for your life  
or a report that relieved you from fear.

Perhaps it was a day you set off on your own journey of discovery –  
your own Odyssey despite ‘the devil or the deep blue sea’  
not only to find safe haven at day’s end,  
but even buried treasure all along the way.

Perhaps it will be when you walk out the door today and just start  
looking past any personal disappointment, fear, or grief –  
let alone the world’s broken economy and sectarian strife,  
and start seeing the sanity of God’s world  
and the grace that God sends in the midst of it all.

A day in the life of Jesus is like taking a step into eternity –  
where it’s always “now” and you’ve got all that you need, already,  
because you are living in the midst of God’s mercy.

And Jesus and his disciples returned to find a crowd waiting for him  
in whose midst was a woman waiting for her own miracle of mercy.

I have previously put forth the possibility that the 12 years  
of her illness and the age of the little girl imply  
they are mother & daughter  
and that by healing them, Jesus also restored a broken family.

Willard, p.3

And if you consider that the crowd was made up of the same people  
who had been so angry with him the day before on the Sabbath,  
now desperately waiting for him to heal their leader's daughter,  
then Jesus did successful heart surgery for a community as well.

The narrative concludes as it began as a challenge to individuals –  
and communities, to keep hearts open to affirm what is good.

Amen