



University Christian Church- Austin

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Shine On You Crazy Diamondⁱ

First Sunday in Lent, b, March 1, 2009

Mark 1:9-15

A woman walked into a doughnut shop and ordered three rounds of hot chocolate and three chocolate eclairs, and finished them all. The server didn't think anything of it until the woman appeared again the following day at the same time and then the next day and so on for several weeks.

Finally, the server's curiosity got the better of him. When the woman walked in the next time and ordered three hot chocolates and three chocolate eclairs, he introduced himself.

"My name is John," the server said, "and what is your name?"

"Sue Smith," she said.

"Would you please tell me why you always order three rounds of the same food and drink each day," the server inquired. "I'm really curious."

"Well, you see, my two sisters and I were always close, but now our work has taken us to different parts of the world," Ms. Smith replied. "This is sort of a family thing where we promised to eat and drink to each other every day until we meet again."

The server, John, thought that was admirable and told her so.

Several weeks passed. Then, one day the woman walked in and ordered one fewer round than usual.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Ms. Smith," the server said. "How did it happen?"

"How did what happen?"

"That you lost a sister."

"Who said anything about losing a sister? I gave up chocolate for Lent."

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I know some other folks who right about now are looking for loopholes in there Lenten self-discipline plans, not much more plausible than our new friend, Sue Smith. It is, after all human nature, to search for the clause in the document that sets us free to do what we REALLY want, rather than abide by the true spirit of Lent.... A spirit of discipline... that calls for hard decisions and even harder follow-through..

The season of Lent that you and I enter this week, is a set apart time... a specially dedicated time... wherein like Jesus, we first find and **then face** the terror of our wilderness....

Something tells me that Sue Smith may be having a little trouble finding her wilderness.

But after all, that must be what the whole season of Lent is about.... Finding our wilderness and inhabiting it.... At least for a while.

As pleasure oriented and as discipline avoiding as our culture is, each year one church-related image that still gets attention showed up on a lot of people's foreheads on

Wednesday night downstairs in the Fellowship Hall

After a wonder meal and good conversation.

Little gray crosses of ash smudged

above the brow signal the beginning of Lent. Black as a lump of coal..

At the imposition of the ashes, everywhere Ash

Wednesday is celebrated, the pastor recites from Gen. 3:19,

"Remember, you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Lent is the 40 days preceding Easter, the Great Fast, a time of prayer and penitence -- and it starts with dust and ashes .

A recognition of our total dependence upon God....

We seem so alienated from that Spirit.... When we are feeling low... feeling incapable of coping... wondering where we'll find the strength to continue... and ultimately, whether or not we are even worth it.

I receive mail from an old college friend who routinely bemoans the fact that we humans are such a disappointing species.... Ruining the earth and the dynamic balance between life forms that has been worked out over eons of evolution. My friend awaits the arrival of some new species of life, superior to us, which can better carry on the role of co-creating the next developments on earth with God.

Part of my old friend's frustration with the world we humans are constructing, is that he knows our background is so amazing. He'd be the first to remind us, that every atom of our bodies, our buildings, of the world of nature.... Every single atomic particle was present at the Big Bang, the creation of the Universe. We are all walking, talking combinations of elements that were once forged in the nuclear furnace of some star.....and then millions of years later.... All the stuff you and I are made of was exploded into space... Maybe many times before settling on this little planet... 3rd from the sun... that turned blue with oceans and then green with life

. Each atom within us traveled billions of miles over billions of years, been incorporated who knows how many times in different plants and

animals before making its way into the bones of our hands, the sinews of our arms, the photoreceptor cells of our retinas.... We are walking, talking, thinking MIRACLES..... but we don't often act like it.

We seem alienated from the incredibly wise Spirit that created us. And the season of Lent comes to help remind us. The season of Lent challenges you and me to rise up from the waters of our baptism, like Jesus, to move out from the comfort of routine, and to set up residence for a while.... Out on the edge of our abilities... out on the edge of what we think even livable ... where godly angels will minister to us... as the wild beasts – in whatever form- will threaten. Here we, like Jesus, can hear God's call upon our lives.

What will our wilderness look like? I suspect that for each of us, the answer will be somewhat different. We aren't talking about a physical place, necessarily, but a spiritual place. Even in Biblical times the word, "wilderness," meant both the desert, wasteland, but it also meant **the place of spiritual regeneration...** But not just any place of regeneration. One could go to the Temple and be spiritually charged. No, they were speaking of that place we go... or the way of living we take on... that:

- (1.) Limits our own material needs...brings us back to the basics
- (2.) Limits our distractions... tones the number and loudness of those things that fill and overflow our days..., and finally, the place that...
- (3.) Opens us to God's power to guide

How would you **right now** name the wilderness; the set apart place and time that God calls you to?

This is our job, especially in Lent. This is the call of the Great Spirit to our spirit...

- (1.)to first **find our wilderness,**
- (2.)to **reside** there and be purified,
- (4.) to become **self-disciplined;**
- (5.) **informed,**
- (6.) and finally **conformed** to our higher calling. It takes place in the wilderness.

The late Malcolm Forbes, then publisher of Forbes magazine, liked to say that "**Diamonds are nothing more than chunks of coal that stuck to their jobs.**"

Wonderful things can happen when we are faithful to our calling.... When we do what we should, even when the going gets rough.

The actual story of the formation of diamonds is more interesting than Forbes let on. Scientists believe that the only place where the proper conditions of intense heat and intense pressure exist to produce diamonds is deep within the earth in the molten magma of ferociously hot materials that we only briefly view when volcanoes spew their lethal fire. The pressure furnace miles beneath us provide the conditions in which carbon atoms can be molded.... Shaped into the most compact, dense, arrangement possible, with the strongest possible bonds between atoms... a crystalline form that we call diamonds.

We can see all sorts of parallels here to the development of Christian character:

- we become transparent and beautiful when tested by fire;
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- we become the toughest and strongest when we have suffered the worst;

Remember that the next time you gaze at a wedding ring, and see that precious stone. Every single diamond you'll ever see has become beautiful, not in spite of, by virtue of, trials unimaginable.

- I am reminded that God who creates diamonds out of carbon, also desires the Holy Spirit to forge a diamond community out of you and me. Recalling that all of the characteristics we admire in the diamond- its **strength**, its **beauty**, its **durability**—all come from how the individual atoms of carbon line up in the tight, close, attractive bonds... how the individuals atoms are ordered in community...
- So we may hear in the background the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians Chapter 4:,
- *4:1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,*
- *2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,*
- *3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*
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Let us dedicate ourselves, this morning, right now, to finding our Lenten wilderness, and boldly, faithfully moving into it... Trusting this amazing God,

not only to provide, but guide;

not only to feed, but to lead;

not only to show us, but to grow us into people of faith and witness for the cause of Christ.

ⁱ A reference to the Pink Floyd song done as a tribute to Syd Barrett. The following is from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syd_Barrett

“Barrett had one noted reunion with the members of Pink Floyd, which occurred in 1975 during the recording sessions for *Wish You Were Here*. He attended the Abbey Road session unannounced, and watched the band record "[Shine On You Crazy Diamond](#)" — a song that happened to be about Barrett. By that time, he had become quite overweight, had shaved off all of his hair (including his eyebrows), and his ex-bandmates did not at first recognise him. Eventually, they realised who he was and Roger Waters was so distressed that he was brought to tears. Barrett's behavior at the session was erratic, and he spent part of the session jumping up and down while [brushing his teeth](#).^[30] A reference to this reunion appears in the film *The Wall*, where the character Pink, played by [Bob Geldof](#), shaves off all of his body hair after succumbing to the pressures of life and fame”

The lyrics to the song are:

Shine on you crazy diamond.
 Now there's a look in your eyes, like black holes in the sky.
 Shine on you crazy diamond.
 You were caught on the cross fire of childhood and stardom,
 Blown on the steel breeze.
 Come on you target for faraway laughter, come on you stranger,
 You legend, you martyr, and shine!

You reached for the secret too soon, you cried for the moon.
 Shine on you crazy diamond.
 Threatened by shadows at night, and exposed in the light.
 Shine on you crazy diamond.
 Well you wore out your welcome with random precision,
 Rode on the steel breeze.
 Come on you raver, you seer of visions, come on you painter,
 You piper, you prisoner, and shine!

Nobody knows where you are, how near or how far.
 Shine on you crazy diamond.
 Pile on many more layers and i'll be joining you there.
 Shine on you crazy diamond.
 And we'll bask in the shadow of yesterday's triumph,
 And sail on the steel breeze.
 Come on you boy child, you winner and loser,
 Come on you miner for truth and delusion, and shine!