

Pastor's Corner

July 2012 – Rev. Eric Lane

At the Conference this past week, Rev. Adam Hamilton, pastor of the largest United Methodist Church, was invited to provide, “Lessons by the Lakeshore.” During one of his teaching sessions, he told a true story of sacrificial giving. Adam talked about his family’s camping vacation in Yellowstone Park, which coincided with his birthday (July 12). After arriving and setting up camp, Adam invited his two girls to walk around the lake and go watch the setting sun by the pier.

Upon arriving at the camp grounds, Adam had given each girl \$20.00. He told them that they should be careful where and how they spent their money, because that would be all they would get for the week. As they were walking along, they passed by the camp store. His younger daughter was an avid shopper. Adam said that she would rather shop than eat.

Naturally, the girls wanted to go into the store and look around. Adam reminded them that this was just the first day and to remember all they had to spend was \$20.00. Both girls said they understood and off they went, combing the aisles of the store. As he expected, it was not long before his younger daughter came running up to him with a cap in hand. “Dad, I have just got to have this hat.” After checking the price, Adam reminded her that she only had \$20.00, and if she bought the cap she would not have any money left.

Adam walked away, hoping that she would put it back on the shelf; but his daughter caught up with him again and asked if she could buy the hat. Once again Adam reminded her of the situation. Now as a parent, you no doubt have been in a similar situation. Again and again his daughter continued to come back until finally, frustrated, Adam said, “Okay. It is your money—just don’t come back to me asking for more, because that is all that you have.”

“Thanks, Dad”, she said, and off she went to pay for the cap. After her purchase they continued their walk. Along the way, his daughter would pull the cap out and ask Adam if he liked it. Each time Adam responded with; “Yes, honey, it is a beautiful cap; but you have spent all your money and you have nothing left.”

Finally, they came to the pier and sat down to watch the sun set. Once more his daughter pulled out the cap and again asked him if he liked the cap. Trying to hold back his true feelings, Adam again responded to her by saying, “Yes, honey, I like the cap. It is a beautiful cap, but it cost you all of your money. Now you have nothing left to spend. You have spent everything.” Then his daughter looked up at him and said, “I know, Daddy. It is your birthday, and I saw this cap...and I wanted to buy it for you. Happy birthday, Dad!”

This is a wonderful example of a willingness to give all for someone you love. Luke 9:25 says; “What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?” John says in John 3:16; “For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and ONLY Son...” Why? Because it was our birthday and God just wanted to give.

Adam said that he had no words to respond to her gift, except to say “thank you.” Then, he

pulled out that cap that she had given him some 13 years earlier, and explained that he kept it on a shelf as a reminder of that day.

Some things you simply cannot put a value on. Some things are worth giving your all for. At least, that is how God felt about you and me. So, how will you respond? Do you give to God because you feel that you are obligated, or that you must give, or in hopes of a return on your investment; or is your gift an act of sacrificial love?

A young man gave up all that he had and as a result well over 5,000 were fed with plenty of leftovers. The early followers of Christ sold all that they had, and brought it together to be shared—not just with the group—but with those around them. As a result, many became followers of Christ. I did not just make these stories up. They are recorded in the Bible. Jesus's words were (see John 14:12): "anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these;" but it requires us to sacrifice and to have faith.

Think about it...