

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

FEBRUARY 13, 2005

PASTOR MARK FRY

1 PASTOR MARK FRY: It's kind of an interesting
2 Sunday with it being in between a worship series that we're
3 hoping to start next week and that's why we have the dock
4 here and we have the boat and if you want to purchase that
5 book, "If You Want To Walk On Water You Have To Get Out Of
6 The Boat."

7 We have some of those for sale. It's a great book.
8 There are some people who have really quivered over that
9 book as well.

10 We are not always going to do worship series around
11 books, this is two in a row, but this is worth it. So
12 hopefully you'll be blessed by that.

13 This is kind of in between, as I say, I want to
14 recognize Valentine's Day.

15 It's my favorite holiday, because it's my birthday,
16 and somebody was kind enough to give me a Valentine at the
17 beginning.

18 So what I want to bring together is a little bit of
19 the strands of the red and the blue and come up with purple.

20 So how I am going to do that is the first slide I
21 have is a picture of the results of the 2004 election.

22 And unfortunately, and I'm all for President Bush,
23 he wants to be a uniter and not a divider, but when we start
24 saying you're either red or blue it causes a real challenge.

25 And that's not only my premise for states, but also

1 for states of being.

2 We live in a state where everybody gets into the Go
3 Big Red.

4 I have dear friends from Michigan. My
5 brother-in-law is from Michigan and he's as adamant about
6 blue as we are about red, and there is a danger in that, of
7 typecasting, stereotyping red and blue, and what I want to
8 do is bring those together.

9 Because if you combine those two colors what do you
10 get?

11 You get purple, and purple is our color for the
12 passion of Christ, which is made manifest in Jesus, his
13 forty days in the wilderness, his Palm Sunday entry into
14 Jerusalem, and his death and his resurrection, that passion.

15 So that is where I want to go and the way I want to
16 get there is going to be kind of by making some of that.

17 But we've got states of sadness and we've got some
18 states of blue, melancholy, and then we're also kind of Go
19 Big Red.

20 So I have a song bite that I think brings in that
21 blues element. Brad, do you want to hit that Albert King
22 bite?

23 "Everybody understands the blues

24 Are you listening?

25 Yeah.

1 I say everybody understands the blues
2 Everybody from one day to another has the blues
3 You take the little baby
4 That is laying in the cradle
5 He can't get that milk bottle fast enough
6 He's kicking and crying and going on
7 Tearing up the little baby bed
8 He got the blues
9 Can you dig it?
10 Yeah."

11 Albert goes on in that song to talk about it's not
12 just older people that get the blues, babies, teenagers,
13 everybody can have the blues. Can you dig it? And the
14 group says yeah.

15 As I've gotten older my favorite music has become
16 the blues, and I don't really know why that is.

17 I'm an old rock & roll guy, but I always used to
18 see in the old songs that the Stones did and all these
19 artists they were written by other people.

20 And so I kind of took it upon myself to find out
21 who is Muddy Waters? And who is John Lee Hooker? And who
22 is Albert King and who are some of these old blues guys, and
23 what they were saying and what were they writing about.

24 That's kind of the bottom line. Everybody's got
25 the blues.

1 So I want to bring into that the red of Valentine's
2 Day.

3 And as Christian people we also know the red of the
4 blood of Christ.

5 And I hope when we are done then to come up with a
6 little bit of purple and hopefully instill in you a little
7 bit of passion then too.

8 But where I'm coming from is from the Gospel of
9 Luke.

10 If you have your Bible marked you can come back to
11 that page, it's on page 75, and we encourage you to bring
12 your own Bible, if you don't have one we do provide them for
13 you and we'll get you one if you want one, too.

14 So the Gospel of Luke, the 17th chapter. We need
15 to understand the context of this.

16 The first word out the disciples' mouths is, "Lord,
17 increase our faith."

18 What has Jesus just said to get them to that prayer
19 of increase my faith? It's the 17th chapter, the first four
20 verses.

21 "Jesus said to his disciples, occasions for
22 stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they
23 come. It would be better for you if a millstone were hung
24 around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for
25 you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on

1 your guard. If another disciples sins, you must rebuke the
2 offender and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And
3 if the same person sins against you seven times a day and
4 turns back to you seven times and says I repent, you must
5 forgive."

6 And what do they say? "Lord, increase our faith."
7 In other words, how do we do that?

8 My contention is the Apostles had the blues,
9 because what has happened is Jesus has just challenged their
10 faith.

11 And I don't know about you, but I pray that prayer
12 a lot.

13 Increase my faith. I don't know if I can do this.
14 I don't know if I can do this again, and Jesus says seven
15 times you must do this, if they come to you and say I
16 repent, and remember the season of Lent the big thing is
17 about repenting.

18 It's about changing. It's about going from red to
19 blue and being all mixed up into this beautiful purple
20 tapestry of God's grace as we get ready for Easter.

21 So it's red and blue and that is where we want to
22 end up.

23 The Apostles said increase our faith. In other
24 words, you have got to be kidding, Jesus.

25 It reminds me, there is a guy, he's now a bishop

1 in the Methodist tradition, his name is William Willamont
2 and we had the privilege of hearing him speak at a
3 Presbyterian church in Omaha a couple years ago.

4 We took part of our staff down there and he's a
5 very humorous guy.

6 He has a bunch of books out. One of them is called
7 "The Last Shall Laugh First" and he's a prolific writer and
8 a great preacher.

9 He was voted one of the ten best preachers in the
10 English-speaking language.

11 And at the workshop we were at he was talking to us
12 as churched people and he says, "I always like to go to
13 students."

14 At the time he was the Duke University chaplain and
15 pastor there and students used to come to him and say, "I'm
16 thinking about being in the ministry."

17 And he would say, "What has led you to that
18 conclusion?"

19 And their answer more often than not was, "I just
20 love people."

21 And he said, "Wrong answer. Have you ever seen the
22 people that you are supposed to love? Have you ever been in
23 a church before? They aren't very lovable. So that's the
24 wrong answer."

25 What that says is, we are called to love one

1 another, but what it is, that's what the Apostles are
2 saying, "Lord, increase my faith."

3 I don't know if I can forgive this knucklehead
4 another time.

5 Jesus said seven times. If they come to you and
6 say I'm sorry, I repent, we need to forgive.

7 How are we going to do it? You maybe pray that
8 same prayer. Lord, increase my faith.

9 I don't know how I'm going to do this again. I
10 thought the first test results were bad enough and I thought
11 I had this thing licked, but now here it is again. Increase
12 my faith, Lord.

13 I thought she loved me, and then I found out this.
14 Or I thought my kids were on this track and they end up
15 here. Lord, increase my faith.

16 If you are like me you pray that prayer quite
17 often.

18 And that oftentimes is the prayer that is prayed
19 out of having the blues; having the blues.

20 Repentance is hard enough, but forgiveness is even
21 worse when it comes down to it, because this knucklehead, I
22 didn't know she could do it again, but she now has come
23 back, you see, the repentance is the kind of semantics that
24 is underneath the purple of Lent.

25 That's why we have purple as our color. It's about

1 repentance.

2 It's about changing our perspective and changing
3 our mind and changing our behavior.

4 Repentance is difficult, but look at forgiveness.
5 For some people forgiveness is even harder. How am I going
6 to do it?

7 This kid has not turned out like I thought he or
8 she would.

9 Or my grandparents, how many times do we have to
10 bail them out for their inappropriate behavior?

11 All of this is a family dynamic. Forgiveness is
12 even worse sometimes.

13 What about those times when we are all confused and
14 tangled up and we pray that prayer, Lord, increase my faith.

15 There is another great song, I had to reach back a
16 little bit, too, to make the point that everybody's got the
17 blues, can you dig it.

18 Here's an old Bob Dylan song "Tangled Up In Blues"
19 and you may remember this.

20 "And when finally the bottom
21 fell out I became withdrawn
22 the only thing I knew how to do
23 was to keep on keeping on
24 like a bird that flew
25 tangled up in blue"

1 When the bottom falls out we can get all withdrawn
2 into ourselves and we can really have the blues and get all
3 tangled up with mixed emotions.

4 You need to know that faith and doubt are close
5 cousins.

6 Just because you don't feel as though you have
7 faith does not mean that you do not faith.

8 That's why Jesus, right after they say increase our
9 faith, he starts talking about a mustard seed.

10 And I'm not a botanist, but I do know that the
11 mustard seed is one of the smallest plants in the entire
12 kingdom, and they are very difficult to see.

13 Sometimes it's very difficult for us in the midst
14 of the bottom falling out in our own withdrawnness to see.

15 But God knows that.

16 Some people think of faith in a kind of unclear,
17 unhelpful way, but it has doubt as a very close cousin.

18 In fact, the author of the book of Hebrews says,
19 "Now faith is the assurance of the things hoped for, the
20 conviction of things not seen."

21 That's what Jesus means when he's talking about a
22 mustard seed.

23 You can't even hardly see it, but that's what faith
24 is.

25 When the bottom falls out and we are all tangled up

1 in blue, it's still there because God is still shining his
2 light and sending his word and his sacrament, his water, his
3 wine, to break through that blues and take us into God's
4 faithful future.

5 You can barely see a mustard seed, but it's still
6 there.

7 Just because the sun is not out, just because it's
8 cloudy out doesn't mean the sun is not out there.

9 And these are the days that make us kind of wonder
10 sometimes about the blues, just the meaning of existence.

11 And so into those blues I want to bring in a little
12 bit of red, the Valentine's Day thing, it's not just an
13 intellectual thing as my reason for bringing this in, and
14 thank you for that little heart, Michaela, that's really
15 awesome.

16 That's very special to me. It says friends
17 forever. Yes. That's very wonderful.

18 But this is from the internet, a deal about
19 Valentine's day.

20 Although it's celebrated as a lover's holiday with
21 the giving of candy, flowers, and other gifts between
22 couples, it originated in 5th century Rome as a tribute to
23 St. Valentine, who was a Roman Catholic bishop.

24 For eight hundred years prior to the establishment
25 of Valentine's Day the Romans had practiced a pagan

1 celebration in mid February commemorating young men's right
2 of passage to the god Lupercus.

3 The celebration featured a lottery in which young
4 men would draw the names of teenage girls from a box.

5 The girl assigned to each young man in that manner
6 would be his sexual companion for the remainder of the year.

7 In an effort to do away with that pagan festival
8 the church ordered a slight change in the lottery.

9 Instead of the names of young women the box would
10 now contain the names of saints.

11 Both men and women were allowed to draw from the
12 box and the game was to emulate the ways of the saint that
13 they drew during the rest of the year.

14 In other words, if you pulled out a particular
15 saint's name you had to emulate that person and act like
16 them for the rest of the year.

17 Needless to say many young Roman men were not very
18 happy about the rule change.

19 Instead of the pagan Lupercus, the church looked
20 for a suitable patron saint of love to take his place.

21 They found an appropriate choice in Valentine, who
22 in AD 270 had been beheaded by Emperor Claudius.

23 Claudius had determined that married men made poor
24 soldiers, so he banned marriage from his empire.

25 But Valentine, a Catholic priest at the time, would

1 secretly marry young men that would come to him.

2 When Claudius found out about Valentine he first
3 tried to convert Valentine to paganism.

4 But Valentine reversed the strategy, instead trying
5 to convert Claudius to Christianity. When he failed he was
6 stoned and beheaded.

7 During the days that Valentine was imprisoned he
8 fell in love with the blind daughter of his jailer.

9 His love for her and his great faith managed to
10 miraculously heal her from her blindness before his death.

11 Before he was taken to his death Valentine signed a
12 farewell message to her that said, "From your Valentine."

13 The phrase has been used on this day ever since.
14 Although the lottery for women had been banned by the
15 church, the mid February holiday in commemoration of St.
16 Valentine was still used by Roman men to seek the affection
17 of women.

18 It became a tradition for the men to give the ones
19 they admired handwritten messages of affection containing
20 Valentine's name.

21 The first Valentine card grew out of this very
22 practice.

23 The first true Valentine card was sent in 1415 by
24 Charles, the Duke of Orleans, to his wife.

25 He was imprisoned at the Tower of London at the

1 time.

2 I would beg to differ with that last sentence. The
3 first Valentine was not sent in 1415; the first Valentine
4 was sent about two thousand years ago.

5 The bleeding heart of Jesus is our Valentine that
6 has been sent.

7 But isn't that fascinating the way the church has
8 had such a great impact on the way culture now has
9 recognized this celebration.

10 And it's not just the brain, but it's also the
11 heart.

12 There is kind of a feel good little email that goes
13 around once in a while.

14 A group of four and eight year olds were asked this
15 question. What does love mean?

16 Here is what Rebecca, age eight said. She said,
17 "When my grandmother got arthritis she couldn't bend over
18 and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it
19 for her now, even when his hand got arthritis, too." That's
20 love.

21 And Billy, age four, "When someone loves you the
22 way they say your name is different. You know that your
23 name is safe in their mouth."

24 That's the way Jesus is when he speaks your name.
25 I love you. You can put your name in there.

1 If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on
2 it. If God had a wallet your photo would be in it.

3 Terry, age four, says, "Love is what makes you
4 smile, even when you are tired."

5 I would say even when you have the blues, Terry.
6 Love does that.

7 "During my piano recital," Cindy, age eight, says,
8 "I was on stage and I was scared. I looked at all the
9 people watching me and saw my dad waving. He was the only
10 one doing that. I wasn't scared anymore."

11 That's love. When you are scared, your dad is
12 waving at you, saying over here, in here, I love you. Your
13 name is safe in his mouth forever.

14 It's not a quick fix; it's a long-term matter of
15 the heart.

16 It's like a mustard seed that grows and comes to
17 fruition.

18 I was making a big stink this week in the office
19 when I went out and took kind of an experimental shot at it
20 and bought some of this Red Bull stuff.

21 Raise your hand if you have drank Red Bull. This
22 is okay to confess.

23 Maybe five percent of us have been dumb enough to
24 buy into that marketing ploy.

25 If you had it, it's kind of an interesting

1 phenomenon. I had my can of it Wednesday and I was
2 pretending I was really hyper, but an hour later I had a
3 splitting headache.

4 And I don't know if it was the Red Bull or my
5 imagination, but listen to this little bit. It is called
6 the Red Bull buzz.

7 With colorful names and word-of-mouth buzz energy
8 drinks have become the fastest growing segment of the soft
9 drink market.

10 With sales going from a mere twelve million dollars
11 in 1997 to one billion dollars in 2004.

12 Surveys show that 22 percent of college students
13 are slurping down these sugar-packed caffeine fortified cans
14 of juiced-up juice.

15 Now there are some two hundred brands of energy
16 drinks following in the wake of Red Bull, the overhyped
17 granddaddy of them all.

18 At about three dollars a pop for an eight ounce can
19 it would seem like the expense would be a real buzz kill,
20 but it's not at all.

21 In fact it's the opposite of that. People are just
22 slurping these things up.

23 So what is the real attraction? It's probably not
24 the taste.

25 You guys who said you have tasted it, it's not bad,

1 and I am not advocating you go out and spend three bucks on
2 a can of this stuff, but it's very, very, sugary, and I just
3 saw yesterday when I was Baker's they now have a Red Bull
4 that is sugar-free, which that's out there, too, a little
5 bit.

6 It's probably not the taste. Red bull, for
7 example, this guy says tastes something like liquid Sweet
8 Tarts. Really, really sweet.

9 The caffeine is a bigger draw, but in reality the
10 average energy drink has the same caffeine content as a weak
11 cup of coffee.

12 The most hyped up ingredient though is taurine, a
13 non-essential amino acid that sounds pretty testosterone
14 fueled.

15 Taurine, which is from the word taurus for bull,
16 and hence they call it Red Bull, and if you look closely on
17 here they have two bulls that are going after it on here.

18 The presence of taurine in the ingredients has even
19 led to rumors on college campuses that it has bull
20 testosterone added to the drink.

21 Fortunately or unfortunately, as the case may be,
22 that's really a lot of bull the guy says.

23 What is clear, or maybe not so clear, is what Red
24 Bull claims this drink will do for you.

25 Here are just some of the few rather vaguely-stated

1 benefits of chugging down a three dollar can of Red Bull.

2 It improves your performance; improves
3 concentration and reaction speed; improves your vigilance;
4 improves emotional status; stimulates metabolism.

5 I mean, man, let's start importing that stuff right
6 in. In fact, it's an Austrian drink. It's made over in
7 Europe.

8 A men's fitness magazine study shows that there may
9 be some short term benefit to the Red Bull buzz.

10 The effects may be more psychological than physical
11 however.

12 New York City college student Dave says his morning
13 can of New York Minute actually wakes him up more than
14 coffee, although it has no caffeine.

15 Katie's rationale for drinking the stuff however is
16 probably the most accurate assessment of at all.

17 "Maybe I think it works just because they say it
18 works," she says. "Deep down I'm a slave to peer pressure."

19 The reason I kind of bring that into the mix is
20 that a lot of people think in this world that you're going
21 to get the quick fix.

22 Lord increase our faith. Right now, right this
23 very minute, snap our fingers.

24 But it doesn't always work that way, and it's not
25 purchased in a can or in a bottle.

1 But it is given and shed for you, very small,
2 almost mustard seed amount of the body and blood of Christ.

3 And that's kind of where I am going. You take that
4 and you mix it with the blues, and it doesn't make rainbows
5 and moon beams, but it does change a lot and it makes it
6 more purple.

7 My hope for you this Valentine's Day weekend is
8 kind of from this little slide I've got of this heart.

9 I thought that was an awesome heart that Martha
10 came up with.

11 And in that heart you can notice a little bit of
12 red, a little bit of blue, and the purple.

13 And what I would encourage you and invite you to
14 consider doing as you walk through the forty days of Lent
15 and when you come on our weekends and you listen about
16 fishing, and a little bit about getting out of your boat, if
17 you would work on your relationships upward, outward and
18 inward.

19 And what that does then is it turns that heart
20 over, when the cross is added, and so when you add that
21 cross, notice the heart now is not pointing at me and mine;
22 it's pointing at God and God's.

23 And so that is the most important relationship we
24 work on, the upward relationship, and the inward, and the
25 outward, as we come to this beautiful season and this

1 beautiful time.

2 Jesus goes even a little further. He talks about
3 the mustard seed and then he really kind of puts them on
4 their heels when he talks about, if you are going to have a
5 party, the farmers and the shepherds are going to come in,
6 how many of you just let them eat right away?

7 Well, none of us do, that's the point. It's not
8 humanly possible.

9 And then he kind of says this whole deal about,
10 well, you guys are just doing what you ought to do, we know
11 that, call yourselves worthless slaves, we are no longer
12 worthless slaves because, you see, we have been turned over.

13 We used to have the blues, we used to just have the
14 reds, but now we are purple, we are forgiven, and we are
15 sent and we are apostles now that can go forward.

16 I want to come clean a little bit, we don't really
17 like to talk about cleansing and being cleansed, we prefer
18 cologne because it just works on the surface level.

19 But I would invite you, work on that upward
20 relationship, take ten minutes more each morning or whatever
21 and just feel God loving you.

22 Feel God saying your name. It's safe in his mouth.
23 Feel God cheering you on.

24 What I want to do is play this last little song
25 bite.

1 But what I want you to do is I want you to think of
2 Jesus singing this to you.

3 This is Albert king and the name of the song is
4 "I'll Play the Blues for You" and go ahead, Brad, hit that.
5 This is Jesus singing to you.

6

7 "If you're down and out

8 And you feel real hurt

9 Come on over to the place where I work

10 And all your loneliness I'll try to soothe

11 I'll play the blues for you

12 Don't be afraid, come on in

13 You might run across some of your old friends

14 I'll play the blues for you."

15

16 Isn't that a great song when you think of it that
17 way, because that's what the whole forty days in the
18 wilderness thing is, is he's there with you.

19 I'll play the blues for you, and I'll play the
20 blues with you, and I'll play the blues through you.

21 And the way he does that is by adding some red, his
22 precious blood, so that we might be changed and we might be
23 change agents.

24 My prayers are with you as you continue. We would
25 love to have you here for the Wednesdays and the Sundays.

1 Maybe that's a nice helpful step, just say let's do
2 the Wednesday night church experience to get a little bounce
3 back in your week, a little bounce back in your step.

4 Let's pray together before we go and live.

5 Thank you, gracious God, for the invitation to live
6 life abundantly.

7 Thank you for taking away the blues different times
8 in our lives.

9 Thank you for playing the blues with us when we are
10 in tangled up messes.

11 Would you teach us, Lord, to love more faithfully
12 and to forgive as often as is necessary, for you keep
13 forgiving us, and we are your slaves, but also your friends,
14 so continue, Lord, to work in us and work through us.

15 Bless us with your Spirit as we continue our faith
16 journey.

17 We know when the bottom falls out you will catch
18 us. In the name of Christ. Amen.

19

20

21

22

23

24

25