

Der Rote Faden – The Red Thread

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November 22, 2015

Sunday Sermon at Colorado Family Church



Introduction

It is an honor for me to speak to you today. As someone who recently joined you here I have to say that Denver has such a nice and welcoming community. I don't know all of you that well, but I know that all of you come from such diverse backgrounds and have been through a lot and have so much life experience. I was wondering what it is that I can offer you today.

The topic I felt strongly to talk about will be nothing new for you, but I can talk about it from my perspective and combined with some of my life experience.

To introduce myself – when people ask me where I am from, this is a difficult question to answer. I was born to missionary parents in South Africa, lived most of my life in Austria and now since 6 years I am in the USA.

In Austria we speak German and there is a saying “The Red Thread in life”. This will be my topic today. “Red Thread” could be translated as the Central Theme / Big Picture / Recurring Theme and I want to reflect that on life.

Sermon

1. Cute Baby Face



Baby picture: Does this look familiar? I am gaining many experiences as new parent / some are fun and others not so fun. Our daughter started to love joining the table and eating whatever we are eating with her hands. Of course, this can get very messy. So as part of cleaning her up, I have to take a wet cloth and wipe her face, which she sincerely hates and screams each time I am doing this.

I am practically putting her in deep discomfort by pulling out the wet cloth that wipes her mouth. What a baby misses to see and to understand is that I am putting her in a temporary big discomfort so that she can feel much better again by having her face and hands wiped clean of the sticky and slimy food.

She misses to understand the bigger picture – and so to say – the red thread because she still is a baby. As parents, we have a lot of these things we have to do to our children to put them into discomfort for their own wellbeing. One day when they grow older, they will understand.

2. Hungary

Hungary: Let's take this small simple example and implement it into our own life. I can only speak to my own experiences and want to tell you a bit about one period in my life.

When I was 17, I could not wait to get out of the house and go out into the world. So I joined the European Task Force – basically a 2 year missionary program in Europe in which we would go across many countries for fundraising and witnessing. I ended up at some point with a team of eight people in Hungary, in a little college town called Gyor. Our mission was to approach people on the street and to talk to them about God and the meaning of life, then invite them up to our center for lectures.

Our whole team did not speak the language so we would go up to people and basically ask them in broken Hungarian if they want to come upstairs for cookies and tea – then the Hungarian member upstairs would tell them what is going on and invite them to stay for a lecture. We were really successful in getting lots and lots of people to stay for lectures.

But it was a tough time. We were on a low budget and the center was really small – basically a living room / small dining / kitchen and bathroom. We all slept in sleeping bags on the floor. Dining room had a lecture board – when lecture was done, we'd turn the board over and put it on a box for our dinner table. We often invited guests to stay for dinner – interesting experience.

Because the center was so small and we had an intense schedule– we were either always together in a big group or out on the street approaching people by ourselves – so there was no real sharing time / no one to talk to about the struggles you were having. Every day get up at 5 am for an intense schedule.

We kept doing this for 5 months and it was really hard for many reasons I can't go into right now. Many times I asked myself why am I doing this?

On STF – you are always asked to write reflections, so after that period was over I took the time for reflecting on those 5 months and actually – because it was so intense and so difficult and each of us were a bit isolated – I had such deep experiences with God during that time. Those experiences are so valuable – they have had major impacts on all of the decisions I have since then made in my life and therefore greatly shaped who I am now.

So even though during that time when I asked myself – what am I doing here – I could not see the bigger picture / at the end I could see how God was working and how he was reaching out to me and moving me so deeply – in which I could understand his heart better. I could see the red thread throughout all that time.

3. The Big Move

Republic of South Africa: I would like to expand this topic even broader based on my personal life experience.

My Parents went to South Africa in 1975 as part of the missionaries at that time. Me and all siblings were born there. I am lucky to have had a really good childhood with so much support of many members there that were always there for us and watching us when my parents were travelling a lot. Africans - the ones I know have such a warm spirit.

When I was 10 – we moved from this sunny country to a tiny village in Austria. This meant a country with lots of rain and to me strange people. It was a big culture shock to say the least. I felt like an outsider – and for many many years I could not get over that fact that we moved there and that my parents did this to us. I had a hard time loving Austria and could not wait for the day I was old enough to leave that village which I lived in for 7 years.

I then did 2 years of the missionary work all across Europe and then went on to live and study in the capitol – Vienna to study social and cultural Anthropologie. Almost towards the end of my studies I applied for some very competitive internships in international organizations and because they were impressed with my international background they took me right away and the internship quickly turned into a job.

But not only that – suddenly after all these many years of struggling and missing my home I realized that all of this in life has given me such a breadth of experiences / broadened my mind and helped me understand people from many different backgrounds – this is something very different to the Austrians who believe Austria is the greatest country in the world.

Here again – there was an overall theme that I did not understand at the moment, but looking back it all

makes sense- the red thread is there and each experience is like puzzle pieces falling together and each of them had a purpose and a meaning. While I thought I was being robbed of my precious home; I was given something much greater.

African Korean

2 years ago I met a Korean 2nd Gen whose parents were missionaries in Africa. He and his wife were visiting and over dinner he told me his life story. He basically was raised and grew up in Congo and while his parents were out in Korea on a mission trip the country fell into civil war and there was no way to be reunited with his parents for more than a year. He and his siblings had to stay with church members hearing gun fires and seeing people murdered on the street and could not go to school etc. When finally he got reunited with parents they moved back to Korea with no money and no support from family etc. so he and his sister being young teenagers had to fake their age and work night jobs. His parents chose to be missionaries but he never signed up for it. Finally through many events he could graduate school being the valedictorian in his college and now moved on to be TM translator at all of the current events.

When we see people; we often have no idea what they have been through. Often it is things that we did not sign up for. For many many 2nd gen of this community – also those that decide against the church – we have no idea what they have been through.

4. The End Goal

The End Goal: So what is the end goal? Where is it that we are heading in life? When we are 105 years old looking back at our life – what is it that we are going to see? What will be that red thread in our life?

I believe that the end goal is to grow, mature, and become perfect and loving human beings

“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon earth” Gen. 1:28

“The three great Blessings are fulfilled when the whole of creation, including human beings completes the four position foundation with God as the center. The Kingdom of Heaven, where ultimate goodness is realized and God feels great joy. This is, in fact, the very purpose for which God created the universe” (Divine Principle)

“The ultimate purpose of the universe, with human beings at its center, is to return joy to God” (Divine Principle)

I also believe that God is constantly working with us. Life comes with many challenges. Some of them we have power over – they come to us because of decisions we have made.

But sometimes things happen to us that are as we feel out of our control and it is so hard to understand why. I believe in an ideal world – people should not be suffering. And yet here we are and many of us are suffering- are in a state of so much difficulty and it is hard to understand why and to see the end of it and to understand its meaning.

And yet sometimes; it is exactly these experiences that make us richer and deeper human beings – make us more loving and compassionate and help us understand God’s heart.

“...Such individuals...achieve complete oneness with Him...They experience the Heart of God as if it were their own. Hence, they understand His Will and live fully attuned to it. ...Accordingly...they become God’s beloved who inspire Him with joy. Sharing all the feelings of God as their own, they would never commit any sinful acts that would cause God grief. This means they would never fall.”

Exposition of the Divine Principle, p. 38

Whereas in an ideal world – we hope that there won’t be this much suffering; sometimes I am very moved by people that I meet in life when I hear about their life stories and how circumstances have changed them.

Treasure of Heaven: In general I am so impressed with parents of kids with special needs. I had the privilege to join the ‘treasures of heaven’ workshop in east coast as volunteer and was so impressed by what one of the moms said: ‘My son allows me to live for the sake of someone else every single day’. Every parent wishes for their kid to reach their full potential and it is hard to understand and a challenge to be there when it is different. And yet exactly that child is making everyone around him a deeper and more loving person.

God’s ways and the way he works in our life is sometimes mysterious. We don’t always understand and

see the “Red Thread” in things that happen to us.

5. Us and History

True Father's view on History: When I was studying the divine principle – one of the facts that blew my mind was True Father view on history. It's really incredible. In history classes I was learning ‘this happened in this year and then that event happened’ etc. But suddenly along comes True Father and basically tells us that there was a whole “Red Thread” all throughout History!!!! Since the beginning of time – since the first Human Ancestors there was a meaning and an overall story to this all! Each event in history had to happen for the next event to happen; be it 100 years down the line!

“We must understand that conflicts and wars are interim phenomena to separate good from evil in the pursuit of the ultimate goal. Even though evil may triumph at times, God will use it to steer history toward the fulfillment of greater good. In this respect, we can recognize that the progress of history toward goodness is driven by a process of constantly dividing good from evil according to God's providence of restoration.”

Exposition of the Divine Principle, p.18

We are all part of this Global Human Family. We all play an intrinsic and important part in it. It is easy to get stuck in the moment – be it a happy or a difficult moment and to forget that each tiny step is all part of a bigger red thread; a bigger story; a bigger meaning even if we can't always understand it at the moment.

So I'd like to end with saying; please be encouraged that God is working in your life. He loves you and just wants to be with you. We need to invite him into our lives and trust that he is working with us, leading up to the end goal; which is becoming mature; wholesome and loving beings in his image.

Conclusion

To tie it all back to that picture of the cute messy baby – maybe someday we will become mature enough to understand God's heart more clearly and understand how he is working in our life.

“Just as stronger light casts harsher shadows; harsher trials bring stronger graces”

And not only do we want to understand him; but eventually also be the ones able to comfort him.

Thank you and have a wonderful Thanksgiving week!

