

“I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For”

– Chapel Sermon, September 15, 2007, by Rhodri Samuel

Taking a leaf out of Mr. Robertson’s book, I want you sit back and relax and to listen to the words in the following song, which many of you might recognize. [song plays]

Now I’ll quote from the song –

*I believe in the kingdom come
When all the colours will bleed into one
But yes I’m still running.
You broke the bonds,
You loosened the chains,
You carried my cross and my shame
You know I believe it
But I still haven’t found what I’m looking for.*

This song is from the *Joshua Tree* album and is a great example of U2’s ability to articulate the great spiritual concerns of our generation. The song not only has a wonderful tune, but the words also carry many messages—they express the tension of human existence in that our very nature compels us to seek, yet we cannot find what we are looking for here on earth. As they say in *Star Trek* – “To boldly go where no man has gone before!”

We want to know why the world is what it is,

- Why God allowed sin
- Why good people die young
- Why so many innocent people are killed
- Why natural disasters
- Why so many religions
- Why this and why that

It is not a song of disillusionment or cynicism or about our inability to make a commitment. Basically, it is a song of faith and U2 are declaring our utter dependence on faith. Words like, “You carried my cross,/You loosened the chains” are words of Christian conviction.

Yet here’s the thing – U2 are saying that faith is not a destination, but a journey. Life, as you know, can be compared to a journey. When I consider 9/11, or the Middle East, or the poverty in much of our world, I certainly can’t say that I have found what I am looking for. When I look at the church—too often divided and ineffective—I can’t always say that I have found what I am looking for. When I look at my own life, I would be arrogant to say I have found what I am looking for.

Faith does not proclaim that we have found what we are looking for; instead, it forces us to embark on and to continue the spiritual journey.

Mr. Perry made reference to the Old Testament last week, and there are many references to journeys, pilgrims, and crusades in the scriptures: Israel is portrayed as a Pilgrim people; Moses’ journey through the wilderness. Today’s Biblical passage, read by Jen earlier in the service,

talked about St. Paul on his spiritual journey. Life is not an easy road, and the journey is filled with obstacles and difficulties.

As Bono refers to earlier in the song, “I have climbed the highest mountains,/scaled city walls,/run through fields.” It seems there were constant temptations from the devil (“kissed honey lips,” and “burning desire”) but it appears that his stronger devotion and determination overcome those tests.

The words in the song also suggest that we keep an open mind and not to be black and white about things. We must look past cultural differences in the search for peace and acceptance. The journey is infused with hope and expectations.

You are all in the early stages of life’s journey. Two key things I’d like you to remember and take away with you from chapel this morning:

1. Be prepared to take advice, and
2. heed warnings.

(I know that you don’t always want to take advice from people who are older than you—especially from your parents.)

How many of you have played the game, Snakes and Ladders? Or Chutes and Ladders? I’ve often wondered whether the idea of the game came from the Old Testament—possibly with reference made to Eve, when she listened to and was deceived by the snake, which was the beginning of sin. Or Jacob’s ladder, which started on earth and led to Heaven, with angels going up and down. In the board game, if you land on a square at the base of a ladder, you are allowed to climb. However, if you land on the square with the snake’s head—down you go to the tip of the tail! Life’s journey is like a game of snakes and ladders.

In life, we are certain to come across things that give us a boost and make us feel good, but we also come across things that bring us down. Good things tend to lift our spirits; bad things, however, always bring us down. Positive people hang around with positive people. (This is opposite, incidentally, to the laws of physics!)

There is one more thing about snakes and ladders: as you climb up the board, the snakes get longer (and there are more of them, too, if I remember) and the fall is greater. The same is true in life. As you succeed or move on in life, the snakes or temptations are there to bring you down. The fall is greater.

Having faith, I believe, enables us to see the snakes and therefore learn to avoid them. Also, faith enables us to see the ladders and to take full advantage of the opportunities that come our way.

Faith, then, illuminates our lives, but it doesn’t mean it offers simplistic answers to life’s problems. Instead, faith invites us to join in the journey. Faith demands that we do not become complacent or concede to the world as it is, but that we strive to make it what it should be. Like Moses and U2, we must seek to become the people we are truly called to be, and we must keep searching for what we are looking for.