

"UH-OH" ---Sunday, January 27, 2008 ---Elon Community Church
Genesis 1:1; Psalm 46:1-3: 11; John 1:1-5

Our youngest grandson is now 15 years old. We have fond memories of the days when he was just a year old---he was intelligent, charming and very dear to my wife and me.

Even at that early age he seemed to understand what turned me on, how I thought, and what he needed to do in order to have his way with me.

He learned very early to come over to granddaddy, to hold up his arms and indicate that he wanted me to take him. He knew how important it was to place his head on my shoulders, and to snuggle against my neck. He left me totally defenseless and willing to do whatever it was that he wanted.

Despite his vary mature understanding of how his grandfather would respond, his vocabulary was quite limited.

The expression which he used more than any other was "UH-OH".

When he became overbalanced and fell he said "UH-OH"..

When he spilled his milk, his expression was "UH-OH".

If he decided to pick up his bowl of oatmeal and dumped it on the floor, he seemed to think that it would be OK so long as he said "UH-OH".

Since he used that term so frequently, his mother, our daughter Jane, bought the book by Robert Fulghum entitled "UH-OH" and gave it to me for my birthday.

Fulghum wrote that the term "UH-OH" is not in any dictionary and that you very rarely see it in print but most of us use it frequently. It is one of the first expressions which the baby learns.

He even imagined that it may have been the first thing that Adam said to Eve after he took the first bite of the forbidden apple. He described "UH-OH" as a shorthand sound which represents many complex thoughts.

He said that this expression rates high on the list of short syllables with large meanings. He went on to say that as a minister he has been around death often in hospitals and in cemeteries and he feels that when he sees his own death coming he may very well respond by saying "UH-OH".

It seems to me that "UH-OH" is more than a momentary reaction to small problems - rather, it is an attitude or perspective on the universe.

Fulghum went on to say that his view of the conditions of existence is summarized in a simple equation:

$$\text{UH HUH} + \text{OH, WOW} + \text{UH OH} = \text{AH HA}$$

When I listened to Fulghum read his book on the audio tape which Jane gave to me I began to wonder how often I find myself saying UH - OH.

Later I was preparing to teach my Sunday School class and I was reading the first chapter of Genesis. I read IN THE BEGINNING GOD...and I said "UH-OH". That is some lesson. You really don't need the remainder of that chapter. You don't need to read the other version of the creation found in the 2nd chapter of

Genesis. You don't need to listen to the debate between the creationists and the evolutionists. You don't need to go any further. You simply read IN THE BEGINNING GOD and you instinctively know it is "UH-OH" time.

As I studied that lesson I came across a statement made by one of the nation's leading scientists, Dr. Stephen Jay Gould, in a lecture a few years ago at Duke University. Dr. Gould said: "the universe is the result of an amazing, utterly unpredictable, series of wonderful cosmic accidents..." I shook my head and I said "UH-OH".

Did he mean to say that the majesty of the mountains, the splendor of the forests, the glory of the orchid, the fragrance of the rose, the incredible wonders of the human body, and the awesome power of Niagara Falls all resulted from accidents? Well, I thought about that and I said "UH-OH". and you get the idea of what I think of his statement.

Then I read a statement made by Dr. William Willimon, long-time chaplain at Duke University and now a Methodist bishop... He wrote: "however and whenever we came into being, it was God who gave us being...As it says IN THE BEGINNING GOD..." and I said "UH-OH".

Then, I had an interesting idea...in several of the psalms the word SELAH is used to separate sections of the psalm. You read a few verses and then you see the word SELAH. And I thought how interesting it would be to try substituting the expression UH-OH wherever we find the word SELAH. Let's try it with a few verses of Psalm 46.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear. UH-OH Though the earth shakes, though the mountains move in the depths of the sea, though its water roar and foam, and though the mountains quake before his majesty...the Lord of Hosts is with us...the God of Jacob is our refuge..UH-OH, UH-OH.

I told my class that no lesson on the creation is complete without reference to the first verses of the Gospel according to St. John...you recall those words:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God...UH-OH

He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made...UH-OH, UH-OH In Him was life, and the life was the light of men...the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. UH-OH

Obviously, we could continue this exercise with many different scripture selections but let's do it just once more.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. UH-OH For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God, in Christ Jesus, Our Lord....UH-OH, UH-OH, UH-OH

Now we are here in the Elon Community United Church of Christ...on a lovely day in mid-winter.

It is a day fit for UH-OHs, OH-WOWs, and maybe an occasional AH HA.

Because this is a day when we recognize how fortunate we are, how greatly we have been blessed, and we join in giving thanks to God for his many mercies.

In the little country church of my childhood, we used to sing a familiar song entitled Count Your Blessings.

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed
When you are discouraged
thinking all is lost
Count your many blessings, name them one by one
And t will surprise you what the Lord has done.

When you look at others with their lands and gold
Think that Christ hast promised
you his wealth untold
Count your many blessings
money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven nor your home on high.

So, amid the conflict, whether great or small
Do not be discouraged, God is over
all
Count your many blessings, angels will attend
Help and comfort give you to
your journey's end.

Count your many blessings, name them one by one
Count your many blessings, see
what God has done.

Sunday worship is a time for doing just that. We think about the church which nurtured us as children; which taught us during our developing years; and served as our home among Chistian friends as we matured. Have you ever stopped to think how different your life would have been if you had not had the church and its ministry to bless you life?

Or, think of your neighbors and your friends and remember how they have stood by you...how important they have been when you have experienced problems and how they have supported you when you needed them, and then shared with you in times of joy and success.

And, think of your families and what they have meant to you--grandparents and parents and how they have blessed you---how they have loved and sacrificed too make life better for us than it ever was for them. How they worked with us and prayed for us; how they rejoiced with us when things went well and how they sympathized and stood by us when we suffered reverses.

The words of John 4:37-38 come to mind

One sows and another reaps,,others have labored and we have entered into their labors. And I say, UH-OH We are indeed a richly blessed people.

So, this is a great day...this has been a joyful week. For me, each one is!!

It is a time to rejoice, to sing praises, to say AMEN...and maybe an occasional UH-OH...or, however

you choose to respond to your creator and the glories of creation when you consider the blessings of living and serving in such a time and place as this.

We are surrounded by so many blessings. We have so many reasons to be thankful. When we consider what a wonderful time it is to be alive....we can gratefully and prayerfully say UH-OH, UH-OH, Amen.

---Earl Danieley