

## SQUIRREL TIME (Yes, squirrel time)

Holy Humour Sunday - Redux (John 10:22-30 - Jesus claims to be Son of God)



(We opened with "The Mississippi Squirrel Revival", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=K16fG1sDagU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K16fG1sDagU))

Well, after *that* video, who needs a sermon..?! Were you just like me, and could you just imagine what a squirrel on the loose might look like here at Pinegrove? I've heard stories of a rooster that once got away during worship before my time here, pecking away at people's toes and calves, maybe that's the closest we ever got.

In the video we saw the nice, religious folks of this sleepy Mississippi church getting yanked wide awake by a squirrel. First, the little

rodent crawls into the coveralls of a farmer, who leaps up and starts to shake and dance. Some think the Holy Spirit got into him, others think he's possessed by a demon - until he falls to his knees to beg for *forgiveness* - and the squirrel escapes through a leg of his pants, off to its next target.

That next target is a very religious and very self-righteous lady who doesn't think much of anyone else but herself. The squirrel climbs her garters and does a few laps there, making her jump up screaming, "Lord have mercy on me!" And then this very pious lady starts to confess her sins, sins that would make a sailor blush!

People think it's the Spirit at work, and they start waving their arms in the air, shouting hallelujah. When the collection plate comes around, they dump their wallets and jewellery on it, raising over \$25,000. Fifty people volunteer for a mission trip to Africa, and everyone wants to be re-baptized, whether they need it or not. A simple squirrel reviving an entire church.

What a day! Instead of sitting piously in their pews saying and believing all the right things, they got up and started actually *doing* them! Just like Jesus said in our reading this morning: "the proof is in the *work* I do in my Father's name." So if you see that what Jesus is doing, you will believe. Doing comes first - believing follows. And the things you say you believe in... not nearly as important as the things you *do*.

Of course it's just a fun, silly song, but it actually makes a good point. Because part of the refrain goes, "It was a fight for survival, that turned into revival". When a church is in "survival mode", they feel they've lost so much already, they're afraid to lose the little that's left. So all you can think of is to hold on to things they still got, keeping them the way they are. The result? Well, I think the listless congregation we see at the beginning of the video says it all. For them, it's all about *saying* what they believe in - not *doing*.

That was a congregation that's not plugged into God, the Source of all life, the Ground of all Being. They were plugged into their own petty little things - afraid of showing their true feelings, afraid of taking risks, afraid of change. They were determined to not hear Christ's call to come and follow him, because who *knows* where *that* would lead them.

The result? A bunch of "churchy people" who only feel comfortable doing the same thing over and over again. It's a very understandable reaction to times of uncertainty and loss, and lots of churches are going through it; and sometimes I notice this tendency even here at Pinegrove. As I said, it may not be helpful, but it *is* understandable.

But Christ will not give up, relentlessly trying to get through to us so we can no longer ignore him. We'll just have *got* to listen and pay attention. And if it takes a squirrel to wake us up and get from *survival* to *revival*, so be it. The Spirit comes in many shapes and forms, and I've seen it in stranger forms than a squirrel.

So next time you feel scared, or angry, or anxious or jealous and it takes over - ask yourself what it is you're plugged into that blocks you from noticing Christ's presence. Take time to pray and meditate on it, though, because whatever the answer may be, it will not be an easy one. We usually prefer to keep listening to the old familiar unhelpful tapes instead of taking off our headphones - and to just listen, listen to what else is there, listen to God's still, small voice.

And next time something unexpected happens in your personal life or family, or in our family of faith, something uncomfortable that upsets the way we've always done things, ask yourself if just maybe that's the squirrel that God has let loose to wake us up, to shake us up - and to be revived. And who knows where *that* might lead!

Amen.

**Scripture reading for April 17, 2016**  
**John 10:22-30** (Jesus claims to be the Son of God)

It was now winter, and Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time of Hanukkah, the Festival of Dedication. He was in the Temple, walking through the section known as Solomon's Colonnade. The people surrounded him and asked, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

Jesus replied, "I have already told you, and you don't believe me. The proof is the work I do in my Father's name. But you don't believe me because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; *I know them, and they follow me.* I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.

No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

One: This is the witness of the apostle John. **All: Thanks be to God!**