

## THE THREE MOST EXPENSIVE SENTENCES I HAVE EVER SPOKEN.

Just as the students at Hogwarts dared not speak aloud, the name of Lord Valdemort, and referred to him only as “he who must not be named,” so Episcopalians are so afraid of 2 terms that we dare not speak them aloud, and refer to them only as “the S words.” Although the next 7 minutes is all about the S words, I promise never to mention them aloud, as I tell you about THE THREE MOST EXPENSIVE SENTENCES I HAVE EVER SPOKEN.

Now long before I started inflicting my nasal voice on all of you, and long before my decades of stamping out disease with both feet, I trained as a biologist, in a valley far away from here and on a hilltop not far away at all. I busied myself happily breaking complex organisms into understandable bits, analyzing the tree’s xylem and phloem, positive phototropism and negative geotropism and answering the HOWs of life, while avoiding the whole tree and the WHYs of life.

THEN I MADE MY FIRST MISTAKE. I NOTICED the complexity of the competing forces of cellular anabolism and catabolism repeated a hundred thousand times on each leaf, multiplied by 10,000 leaves on each tree, multiplied by millions of trees. But not just trees, I noticed ferns and grasses and flowers, and all the animals and all the planets and all the stars, and a SUNRISE that had a beauty beyond rotation and revolution and refraction, and pollution, and out of my mouth came those fateful words, “Oh what a beautiful sunrise!”

Go ahead, say it. *“Oh, what a beautiful sunrise.”*

That was pretty passive. I didn’t seem to hurt.

Then I made my second mistake. I began to look beyond the HOWs of life to the WHYs of life. That there was a force out there more complex than our models could describe, somewhere between the strings and the quarks and the dark matter I began to acknowledge God. That is actually quite a large step, putting a name on that diffuse force with which I had become so comfortable. From there came the notion that the universe in fact belonged to God, not me [quite a leap for a Doctor!] and one morning not long after that came the second sentence, “Thank you God, for this beautiful day.”

Go ahead. Say it. *“Thank you God, for this beautiful day.”*

Now say the two together. *Oh what a beautiful sunrise. Thank you, God, for this beautiful day.*

That is light years along the intellectual path, but it's still pretty passive.

Then came the third mistake, when I added, "God, what can I do for you today."

Go ahead. Say it. *"God, what can I do for you today."*

Now say all three together. *Oh what a beautiful sunrise. Thank you, God, for this beautiful day. Now what can I do for you today.*

Now we are in dangerous territory. We run the risk, not only of thinking, but of actually doing.

"But I'm still safe", you say. "We're only talking generalities here."

Wrong!

For beneath our cortical brains, the brains of thought and reason, lie the subcortical brains, the brains we share with our reptilian ancestors. The brains of reflexes, of fight and flight, where ideas like that go to fester and reorganize and pop up again when you least expect them – God tells you what you can do today.

And more often than not, your time and talent and treasure go off in ways that you never would have imagined only yesterday.

Oh yes. I've done the math. Over the years, the returns have far outweighed the investment. Although, sometimes the returns are in an entirely different currency.

Oh! I'm so sorry. I've violated one of my Daddy's oldest rules, when he said, "Son, mix martinis, not metaphors."

So just humor me one more time. Say all three together. *Oh what a beautiful sunrise. Thank you, God, for this beautiful day. Now what can I do for you today. Try it tomorrow. You'll be glad you did. Amen.*

A homily delivered by Matt Weber, Lay worship leader, April 2010