

Life and Daytona Beach Bike Week

Every year I make my annual pilgrimage to Daytona Beach, Florida for Bike Week. No year seems to be a good year to go with the demands of my schedule but I find a way to get there on Wednesday and to return home on Saturday so I can be back in the pulpit Sunday morning to preach. This year was no exception. After driving all night, I checked in at the hotel in St. Augustine and early Thursday afternoon started riding. As usual, the ride was an amazing outlet. I thought I'd share some of the discoveries I had this year.

Scenery. Deciding to skip the fast route on Interstate 95, we made our way down to Route A1A, which is Ocean Shore Blvd. The view is breathtaking as you travel south for 20 miles or so through Flagler Beach, Ormond Beach and into Daytona. You are literally yards from the beach and ocean and during most of the ride you are looking toward the water in awe of the ocean and the beauty of nature. The only thing missing is the sound of the waves beating against the beach but the pipes on my bike won that war. It made me realize the importance of changing our scenery and our environments. Too often we become complacent and an occasional change in our lens is helpful for gaining an appreciation for all that life has to offer. Maybe it isn't a ride in Florida but could just as easily be a stroll in the park, a day at the state park, a walk around a museum or an hour drive in any direction. We can be so busy moving fast that we neglect to enjoy the scenery and lose awareness of where we are going and why.

Stories. You must go to Bike Week to appreciate it fully. But every imaginable motorcycle is there and every type of rider. Everyone from laborers and lawyers, divas and doctors, executives and engineers, bankers and bakers, preachers and politicians, teachers, and techies. We come from every state and many foreign countries. I could not help but to think, "man, we all have a story." Some of us were there to run away and others were there to just get away. Some were divorced, some happily married and some widowers. Some had Ph.D.'s and others less than a GED. Yes, we all had stories. Isn't that just like life? Everyone we encounter has some background, some past, some history with them. We should be careful in judging anyone. The important thing isn't what you are riding or what you come from but rather the fact that you are still around to enjoy the ride and to finish telling your story.

Starts. I for one was there to start over in some areas of my life. As I rode and contemplated my life, the people in my life and the decisions of my life all I could think was this could be a defining moment for me. What if I could go back new, clearer, more resolute, and more determined? What if I could begin again? Clearly, I couldn't be the only one of over half a million bikers making some decisions as he rode. Life is that way. At some point what matters is our willingness to begin again. We all have the power of choice. We can choose to be different, and we can choose to be better. And we can make that choice today.

Soul. Probably my favorite thing to do at Daytona is to go over to Mary McLeod Bethune Drive and hang out in the "hood." This is unofficially called the "dark side." The music, the

food and the people watching can keep you busy for hours. It was my reminder not to neglect the soul. The soul houses our intellect, will and emotion. Spend some time catering to that part of you that feeds your personality. It's ok to do your dance, hang with the folks and enjoy culture. Caesar Chavez, a civil rights activist, and co-founder of the National Farm Worker's Association said, *"Preservation of one's own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures."*

Support. Twice while I was in Daytona, I witnessed riders who dropped their bikes. You must understand the bike I ride is almost 900 lbs. Many bikes are much heavier than that. Often when you drop your bike you need help to get it back up. I am always in awe of the bike culture and how we quickly run to each other's rescue. No one cares why the bike was dropped. What we care about is getting that rider back up and on their bike. People will stop riding and begin to run to the succor of that other rider who almost invariably is a total stranger. Yes, some riders drop their bike because of their own neglect and other times because of poor judgment or uncontrollable road conditions. None of that matters to us. What matters is getting that bike up and making sure our fellow rider can go again. In life we all drop our bikes. Those bikes might be in the form of relationships, finances, health, reputation, careers, decisions, or family. If we could adapt this same perspective of helping each other up rather than talking about why a person has fallen or ignoring their fall or even speculating how many other times they have fallen that we didn't know about. Help somebody up. Get somebody riding again because after all one day you may drop your bike and when you do, wouldn't it be great if someone just helped you up and left you with your dignity and hope for the future as you kept on riding.

What outlet do you have and what life lesson is it teaching you? I welcome your feedback.