

Let's Go Deeper...

Wednesday, November 30



Garrison Keillor signed off his long-running radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion," after 42 seasons last summer. A master storyteller with homespun humor and a distinctively Lutheran slant, Keillor's weekly monologue from fictional Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, always ended with, "Well, that's the news from Lake Wobegon, where all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the children are above average."

Jennie and I started listening to Keillor on St. Louis public radio back in the mid-eighties. We lived on the first floor of what St Louisans called "a two family flat." Our cozy kitchen had wood floors and exposed brick walls. We'd sit at our kitchen table next to the radiator from 6 – 8 p.m. on Saturday nights and listen to Keillor's mellifluous voice.

In the late-eighties, Keillor ended the original Prairie Home Companion. Though his retirement was short-lived and PHC was back on the air within a couple years, I've never forgotten a line from when he signed off thirty years ago. As I recall it, he was anticipating life without the responsibility of preparing and performing a weekly show that aired on Saturday night. He said, "I'm going back to a life where there are weekends."

That line struck me with particular force... and envy. For the entirety of my adult life, thirty-five years and counting, I've lived a life without weekends. I work on Sunday (some think that's the only day). Saturday is a day of final preparation for what I say and do on Sunday. Friday is the day for penultimate preparation on what I will refine and polish on Saturday.

If I have a weekend, it's Monday night. My day off is Tuesday. When I have no meeting on Monday night, my weekend—my Friday and Saturday night, if you will—is Monday night. Whoopee! Has anybody seen a TGIM (Thank God It's Monday) t-shirt? Ever try to find people who want to go out on a Monday night?

Every time I have a Sunday off, as I did this past Sunday, I think of Keillor's wistful words anticipating "a life where there are weekends" and I savor my unencumbered Saturday and Sunday fully.

What a pleasure a "civilian" Sunday is. Rather than waking up at 6:15 a.m. and going through my weekly routine of rehearsing my sermon out loud two times, I slept in until 7 a.m., made a pot of coffee, wrote in my prayer journal, and read the paper. What a pleasure.

When my daughters who were in town for Thanksgiving came downstairs at 8:15 a.m., we made the short drive over to Crestwood Christian Church for their 8:30 a.m. service. Kory Wilcoxson was my daughters' youth minister fifteen years ago and their affection for Kory persists. He preached a thoughtful sermon that led me to nudge my daughter Betsy for something to write with so that I could jot down a few notes. The special music triggered a thought in my mind that I noted. The Advent banner with the bold HOPE printed on it spoke a word of much needed promise in the wake of a neighborhood tragedy the previous evening that had occupied Jennie's and my Saturday night.

We left Crestwood at 8:30 a.m. undergirded by the worship of God and drove home where I commenced to make another pot of coffee and a breakfast of bacon, sausage, eggs, and toast. Whereas I'm usually unable to eat anything on Sunday morning due to waking up with butterflies and adrenalin, I woke up this past Sunday with no responsibilities, an appetite, and a house full of guests for whom I could prepare a hot breakfast.

We sat around the kitchen table for an hour talking leisurely until 11 o'clock drew near. I turned on the radio to 105.5 FM and listened to Central's worship service from the comfortable confines of our den. The singing, the organ, the spoken words from lectern and pulpit: you sound good on the radio!

Shortly after Noon, the girls loaded up the car and headed west for home. Jennie and I stood on our front porch and hailed them as they pulled out of the driveway. We had lunch. Read. Took a nap. Enjoyed the afternoon.

This Sunday, Pastor Elizabeth and Max get their turn with a life where there is a weekend.

Me? I'll be back with you for the second Sunday of Advent. Peace Sunday. Handel's *Messiah* with choir and orchestra. Communion. Four hundred of you plus a hundred or so guests.

That previous stuff about "a life without weekends?"

I'm not complaining.

See you Sunday!

Pastor David