

It's too weird to be a coincident. I have a book at home called God Winks. It's about those times in our lives when God does something to surprise us. I've had two of them now in the last two weeks.

The first one I'm entitling "The Tie Tack in My Zipper." I'm perfectly serious. As odd as it seems, with the timing of the thing, it has to be one of God's winks. On the Sunday afternoon before we left for New Mexico to help at our mission to the Navajo's, I went to pick up a prescription at Walmart. And, while I was there, I visited the bathroom. It was there that I discovered a little bump in the zipper seam of my slacks, just below the buckle of my belt. By feeling the shape of it, I was pretty sure it was a tie tack, but there was no easy way to remove it at the time. On my way home I wondered if my diagnosis was correct and, if so, which tie tack it might be. I assumed it might be one that Betty Jane had given me this past Christmas, as I hadn't seen it for a while.

But here is where the thing really gets suspicious. A number of years ago our daughter Rachel visited our Navajo Mission field with her church and while she was there she bought me this silver and turquoise tie tack. I really cherish it because it came from our mission and from Rachel. But ten months ago (ten months ago!) at Rachel's wedding, I lost it. I thought it was in my pocket, but when I looked for it, it wasn't there. We searched the room where we had dressed for the wedding. We searched the parking lot and the car. It was no where to be found. It bummed me out to have lost it. And, on many Sunday's since then, when I dressed for Church, I would miss it.

Well, now you've guessed what's coming. When I got home and removed my trousers, Betty Jane helped me fish this thing out of the seam. And, neither of us can imagine how in the world that tie tac got lodged in there, but there it

was. It was like Christmas in June. Two days before our trip to the Navajo mission, I find this long lost piece of Navajo jewelry in my zipper. Sometimes God is downright hilarious and sometimes I think God winks!

Then this past Monday morning, I was at my desk in the office, trying to figure out what I was going to say to you today. There was a book on the back corner of my desk, entitled *Come As You Are: Sermons on the Lord's Supper*. I've looked through it many times over the past several years but have never found anything before that I wanted use in a message. Other than the fact that I don't clean off my desk very often, I don't even know why it was still there. But it was and I saw it and decided to take a peek at it once again. I opened it at random, somewhere near the middle and began reading. I got through the fluff of the introduction and came to the following illustration (this is no lie):

*Angie Garber, nearing the age of eighty, is a woman with many stories. The daughter of an Iowa farmer; she stayed at home to take care of her mentally unstable mother until late in her life. Instead of going to college, she got polio. She has never been married.*

*At the age of 38, while attending a seminary in Indiana, Angie was asked to teach on a Navajo reservation in New Mexico. Because she had nothing else to do, and she had read James Fennimore Cooper as a child, she decided to go.*

*For more than four decades, she lived in a tiny, off-white home with three rooms. Her focus in life has never been on things. "When you love things, you use people," she says. "I've got enough. More than enough. The Bible says, 'With food and raiment, be satisfied.' "And," she adds, "a little gas for my pick-up truck thrown in on the side." . . . .*

*That is why, every morning, for more than thirty years, Angie has climbed into her pick-up truck and made her*

*rounds to people she has come to love. She no longer calls herself a missionary to these people. She would rather be called their friend.*

"The only heart that can love," Angie says, "is the one that is broken. You wouldn't have much love if you couldn't share the heartaches. You get so much of a reward when you love others. People take you in as one of her own. You always feel special when you are loved."

(Originally Taken from *Descending Into Greatness* by Bill Hybels and Rob Wilkins. copyright 1993 by Bill Hybels and Ron Wilkins. Zondervan Publishing House)

What were the odds that just a couple of days back from our mission trip to the Navajo, I would pick up a book with sermons on the Lord's Supper, pick a page at random, and read Angie's story? It certainly seems to me that God winked again.

Jesus says in John 6:48-51: *"I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

But here's the question I have to ask you this morning: Have you found where to get real bread—bread that satisfies your soul? It's not to be found in physical food, clothing, or anything that money can buy. It's not found in the myriad things that people in western civilization compete and burn themselves out for. No worldly status or applause, no honored position, no diploma or award and no physical thing can do the trick. Our hearts are hungry for spiritual bread and our spirits thirst for spiritual drink. Nothing else can satisfy the longing that rises up from that deepest secret

place within us. God has made us for Himself and for life in union with His Son. Nothing else will fill that void.

I felt bad that our service last Sunday went so far beyond the normal time frame. I know that some people had to leave before it was over because they had appointments to keep or physical or medical needs that had to be attended to. I also felt bad about some who stayed but felt much stress because the sharing went on so long. I've often been in a similar situation. I understand. I know how uncomfortable I have often allowed that sort thing to make me.

In fact, when we were on the mission trip we went to visit the Hooghan Nizhoni Church of God, that allowed a place in the service for testimonies. An elderly woman went to the platform and began to speak in the Navajo language. She went on for many many minutes and I had no idea what she was actually saying. I could feel my patience running thin; would she ever be finished?

Looking back on it now I see that the problem is in me: I'm not comfortable within my own skin. It's not good enough for me to be. I feel compelled to justify my existence by doing stuff. So, unless I am thoroughly exhausted or thoroughly entertained, I always find it hard to sit still and listen for any length of time. But what we need to grasp is that God loves you and me just because it is His nature to love us. God also has things to tell us, but if we're ever going to hear Him, it is necessary for us to be still and listen. We need to give time, lots of time, for just being in the presence of God.

This is something we would do well to learn from the Navajo people. The Navajo have a saying about us; they say: "You have watches, but we have time." It's crazy how we have robbed ourselves of time by trying to manage it and master it with our clocks, watches, cell phones, whistles and buzzers. Time is meant to be a gift to us which we are to

enjoy and use to the glory of God. Time is for listening for the still small voice of God. Time is given us to discover God's love and to share it with others. Time should not be rushed but savored.

Nevertheless, when Jesus called His disciples together to share with them what we have come to call the Last Supper there was a sense of urgency . "He said earnestly have I desired to eat this meal with you before I suffer." But for all its urgency, things there were done deliberately and paced according to the Master's plan. Jesus took the time to wash His disciples' feet, took time to teach, slowly giving new meaning to the bread and wine. He took the time to let the truths He wanted to teach soak in, took time so they would be remembered, so He would be remembered. The sacred cannot be rushed without ruin.

In the same way I urge you this morning to be reflective as you receive the bread and wine of this Communion. This is the Lord's Table. These are emblems of His body and His blood. This is meant to be a feast--not fast food. Savor this bread. Taste this fruit of the vine. Remember that Jesus died for you. Remember that He means to live in and through you. Invite Him in. Let Him take control. Whatever has happened in your life since our last communion, let this be a new beginning. Take the time just now to invite Jesus into your life anew. He said, "As often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, remember me."

## The Fourth Street Church of God

[4thstcog.com](http://4thstcog.com)

2001 Fourth Street  
Altoona, PA 16601  
942-1007/946-4110

Sermon for July 9, 2017

### Food for the Soul

John 6:48-59

Jon R. Neely, Pastor  
[neelyjon@gmail.com](mailto:neelyjon@gmail.com)