Saint Mark’s Lutheran Church

Interview Sermon Advice from Pastor Jason Van Hunnik, Executive Pastor at Westwood Lutheran Church in Saint Louis Park, MN.

Days like Labor Day, Mothers Day, Fathers Day etc. work well for this.  The basic premise is as follows.

* I invite a couple people to participate, often folks whose story I’m aware of.  I then meet for coffee with each person for 45 minutes to an hour.  In that I ask the basic questions that will frame the sermon along with follow up questions.  They are as follows:  
  + Introduce yourself and your role.  In the above sermon I ask what their title is and what it means.
  + What are the joys of your role?
  + What are the challenges?  (One of the real issues present for many is the question of meaning in their roles.  The first two questions help address this.  In other words, we acknowledge the importance of your work by actually asking about some of the specifics.  Again, if there’s interest in why the questions are chosen I can chat when I get back.)
  + In what ways can this role allow you to serve your neighbor and the world that God loves?  (When it comes to work interviews I try to have both a person in a helping profession and someone whose role isn’t as direct.  In the above case, there’s an addiction counselor and a corporate leader.
  + How does your faith frame how you approach this role?  (This is normally the question that people struggle with the most, which for me, is a critique of us as a church.  We have done a poor job in inviting people to give language to the connection between their faith and their various roles which is one of the prime reasons that most people don’t see the connection.
* Prior to the sermon I then send an email to those I interview and lay out how the sermon will go.  Under each question I highlight which of the things I heard when we had coffee that I would like them to repeat.  This allows me to be a sort of curator of the sermon and its direction.