

Living Lent | Friday, February 17

Jeff Barker

Shouldn't a Church Look More like a Hospital?

Today's Reading: Luke 5:27-32

"After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at the table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Luke 5:27-32 ESV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

On my ride into work this morning, I heard Christian songwriter and musician Matthew West singing his song Truth be Told begging the question "Shouldn't a church look more like a hospital? A safe place for the sick, the sinner and the scarred, and the prodigals, like me." And, throughout the morning I find myself singing those words in my mind over and over, each time feeling a bit more convicted.

Now, I don't dare sing out loud for fear of embarrassing myself, not because of the lyrics but because I'm most certainly tone-deaf and do not wish to inflict such audible pain on even my worst enemy.

Or, maybe I'm concerned that if I sing those words out loud, the world becomes more aware of my shortcomings.

And whom among us are the righteous? Are we not all sinners in need of repentance?

I grew up in the Methodist church and have been a St. Marys Methodist Church member for over 40 years. As you may imagine, I have served on many church committees and in a variety of leadership positions. This includes the finance committee which acts much like an executive committee of the church. Our role is to secure the financial resources necessary to conduct an effective ministry. Many times, however, we focus more on the expense side of the

equation, reducing budgets (and therefore ministries) to match projected income.

Now certainly the church has a business side and if we do not implement sound business principles and practices, we more than likely will end up not doing any ministry at all.

So, what does the church exist to accomplish and how do we know when "it" is accomplished? Jesus challenges us to "...be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." We are called to share God's love for His people such that His people may have eternal life.

Perhaps we will not know (at least in this life) just how well we did in accomplishing this purpose. I doubt however that the evidence of our work will be measured in balanced budgets, beautiful buildings, or even worship service attendance but more likely how effective we were in providing a safe place for the sick, the sinner and the scarred, and the prodigals like me.

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ:

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