

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY JANUARY 26, 2020

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"Y'all Come!"

Based on 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

When my daughter Tara was a toddler, she very proudly came out of her bedroom one Sunday morning, announcing that she had dressed herself for church. Well, she looked like a Gypsy on her way to market. Nothing matched. But the big smile on her face wiped all my doubt away. So mother and daughter headed to church hand in hand: mother proud of her daughter's independence, and daughter believing she was almost a princess in her poufy dress. After church, as the congregation gathered downstairs for coffee and Tara summersaulted her way across the room, Mrs. Busy-Body scurried across and said in a rather loud and imperious voice:

"Your daughter's socks don't match!"

To which I replied, before brain could stop mouth, and common sense and good manners prevailed,

"Yes, but the real question is, does she have any underwear on?"

It's easy for we comfortable, church-going crowd to simply roll our eyes and say, "Every

church has got one!" or "Well, that's about what I would expect Mrs. Busy-Body to say," but unfortunately for us, the world looks at that small snippet of church life and asks,

**"FOR CHRIST
DID NOT SEND
ME TO
BAPTIZE, BUT
TO PREACH
THE GOSPEL—"
~1 CORINTHIANS
1:10-18**

- "Is that what this place is all about?"
- Is it more important to have matching socks than to be there praying?
- I don't really have the right clothes to fit in here.
- I don't even know how to pray. Maybe I'll do it wrong.
- I don't have a Bible and I don't read so good.
- I don't want that woman cornering me making a fuss. I'd be so embarrassed.

- This doesn't seem to be so nice a place as I thought it might be.
- I'll pass."

And all of a sudden, without us hardly even being aware of what has happened, the opportunity to share our story with another thirsty soul, or to show that our faith has so much to offer, has slipped through our fingers, and everyone has lost. Perhaps the issue of mis-matched socks is more important than we realized.

Paul was having a similar problem. The Christian Church was popping up everywhere, thanks to the dedicated work of the Apostles who remained after Calvary and took up leadership, and Paul who was busy in Roman cities further afield, around the coast of the Mediterranean, using his trade skills as a way to weave into these communities and share the Good News. In between, there were lay leaders and strong witnesses: men and women who were willing to continue to lead worship and offer prayers in the absence of the Apostles.

But for the average pew sitter of the day, these 'pockets' of

Christianity did not appear to be working together as one church, or, as one voice with one message. Rather like sticking your hand into a bowl of party mix not knowing whether you're going to pull out a pretzel, a peanut, or a corn chip. Worse still, these 'pockets' of well-intentioned, church-going, faith-blazing new Christians were starting to bicker amongst themselves:

"...One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." (v12)

"Stop!" said Paul.

"Please stop.

We all believe in the same Messiah: Christ.

We are all working for the same thing: a church.

We are called as disciples to do one thing: preach.

Stop arguing about who is following who in the pulpit and who is baptizing who. It is distracting us from what we are supposed to be doing.

Your actions are pushing other believers away and

"Empties the cross of the power it holds." (v17)

Preach!

"For the message of the cross... is the power of God." (v18)

So back to the mismatched socks. Many of us are familiar with the discipleship words from Mark:

"Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." (Mark 1:17)

And as God-fearing Christians, I believe that each of us, in our own way, tries our very best in our daily life to follow the principles of being a good disciple of Christ: we are kind, thoughtful, helpful, and compassionate.

But have you ever considered how our church becomes an example of discipleship in our community? Have you ever considered how our building, our involvement in community affairs, our helpful hand to strangers in need, our willingness to open our doors and assist the broader community, even how we share our parking lot or rent our Fellowship Hall, are all measures of how the world out there tries to better understand the world in here.

Being a 'good disciple' and having our church be an example of 'discipleship ministry' within our community are not the same thing. They are similar, but not the same. It seems ironic, that even as we do our very best to design and plan programs for our church family, and reach out into our city, and care for our shut-ins and the frail in nursing homes..., we must be watchful that we do not become so distracted by the details of church life that we inadvertently become, even if for just a moment, and perhaps without even realizing it, a disappointing disciple to the one in front of

us, or the community group who is asking for assistance. This should be a conversation that gives each us, pause.

I am happy to say that Tara was not scarred for life over the traumatic incident of the mis-matched socks. And she no longer dresses like a Gypsy. But the fact that I still remember the story some fifteen years later tells you something. Imagine if I had not been someone with a long history of understanding small country churches and how they behave.

What if I had been a new mother on her first visit to the church?

Would I have laughed it off?

Or would I have turned on my heel, gathered my children, never to return again?

How our church behaves matters.

How we serve our communities and the people in them, matters.

How we show the world out there, what it means to be a disciple of Christ matters.

Let's make sure our church is the kind Loretta Lynn used to sing about:

Y'all come to see us now and then

Why'all come!

Why'all come!

Well, you all come to see us when you can!

~Bill Munroe