



Honestly Examine Our Lives

September 27, 2015

*“Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”
“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.”*

Thought for the Week

Scriptures: Numbers 11: 25-29 • James 5: 1-6 • **Mark 9: 38-43,45, 47-48**

There is a strange phenomenon that has probably been a natural part of life on this planet since the beginning of recorded history or at least since the age when some people gradually developed greater skills than others and began to insist on special priorities or privileges for themselves. Let's start in the age we know best: this one: Today, we assume that police and lawyers know more about the application of law than the rest of us humans. We will also insist that doctors are more skilled than the average citizen in matters of healing. Why, we will even insist that funeral directors know more about embalming and burying people than we do, so let them do it. Astrophysicists are skilled at getting space vehicles to Pluto, so let's let them do that.

Then, of course, in the realm of religion, most of us assume that some individuals have studied theology for many years; they understand how to interpret the scriptures and doctrine for the benefit of rest of us. They are known by various titles: ministers, pastors, reverends, and priests. For the most part, they have spent considerable time during their lives studying the sacred sciences. Perhaps they are even known for being respectfully religious, a good trait in a minister. Logically and traditionally such folks should be allowed a certain hierarchical preference.

All of this has become part of respectable spiritual life on this planet. Most of us will have no serious argument about it. Some people are just smarter or better trained than others in certain fields of endeavor so let us show them due deference.

I have peacefully accepted these assumptions for the better part of my life, until...until I began to think a little about the hierarchical place of the clergy in various Christian religious traditions. So, inasmuch as I am a dutiful Christian, let me respectfully speak only of that tradition.

Many Christians will readily accept the long-held tradition that certain men and women have responded to a religious vocation; they wish to dedicate their lives to the enrichment of the spiritual life of others. Fair enough, the majority do an admirable job. But my question is this: what about the rest of us ordinary religious citizens? Does not God also call us to certain responsibilities in the service of our brothers and sisters? In short, where do we fit in, in this mix of vocations?

This question suddenly struck me when I read the above captioned scriptures, where we find two stories of individuals who held a certain priority of place in the local religious community. In the Old Testament reading they are termed prophets; in the gospels they are named apostles. These individuals logically assumed that their religious positions were safe from

interference until...until some other individuals (startups) also began to claim a portion of prophecy and apostolic leadership. At that point, the cry arose: "Hey, we are already carrying on these religious responsibilities, there is no room for you" Hence a hierarchical battle ensued.

At this point, however, two cooler heads intervened, namely Moses and Jesus. They insisted that there might well be other prophets and other disciples willing to sponsor religious insight, yes, even a sense of holiness for the rest of the community. Hence, the quarrel was solved. Everyone who feels a call from God to share their ministry with their fellows should have the opportunity.

Now, most of us Community of Christ members would agree with the principle but, of course, we are also aware that vocation in practice is not a simple matter. There is still the question of a calling, education, training and trustworthiness. Then there is always the question of entrenched hierarchical power that we rightfully take for granted to maintain good order.

Perhaps we must admit, however, that there could be a middle ground in this question of vocation for service. Most of us will not simply walk into a church some Sunday and claim possession of the altar or the pulpit for ourselves. Nonetheless, if any one of us feels the call to responsibility in Christ's church, let them rise and demonstrate it. Even the Apostle Paul admitted as much when he listed half dozen available ministries in the early church.

Let me insist, therefore, that no one should claim final and unassailable right to ministry. We are all called to the unique ministry that only God and we know best. Let us all stand up and be counted.

Happy Birthday Audrey (9/30)

Prayer for Peace - Hungary

We give thanks to you Lord God, and praise your mighty works of peace.

We pray for all people in their daily lives and work: for our families, friends, and neighbors, and for those who are alone. We pray for this community, the nations, and especially for the people of Belarus. Be with them as they struggle to overcome the problems that beset them and build a nation where peace and justice are known.

We pray for peace and unity among the leaders of religions and nations, and for all who work for justice and peace.

We pray for the special needs of those here gathered. Guide us, we humbly ask. We confess our failings. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone.

We thank you for our many blessings this day and pray that the Holy Spirit will be with us as we seek to know and do your will. In the name of the Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.

Stewardship Thought

*"Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink
because you belong to Christ, amen,
I say to you, will surely not lose his reward." (Mark 9:41)*

Does your life reflect the life of Jesus?
Remember, we were made in His image.
We tend to forget this.
When others see you,
do they see the face of Jesus?
When you look at others,
do you see the face of Jesus in them?