

The Pastors Connection

Oct. 2011

What Some Were

“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” I Cor. 6:11

Cindy and I attended a twenty fifth wedding celebration recently in the fellowship hall of one of the churches where I previously served as pastor. The husband testified that he was a mess in his first marriage. To his grown children he apologized anew for unfaithfulness to their mother and harshness as their father. With deep emotion he expressed gratitude for Christ’s forgiveness and theirs. With awe he thanked them for accepting his second wife, now of twenty five years.

He noted that when he met his current wife he was dating six other women. Although I don’t recommend being that descriptive of past life when celebrating what now was a faithful Christian marriage; it made me think of the composition of another church Paul described in I Cor. 6:9-11. It’s quite a list! It includes every sexual deviation under the sun. These members had experienced radical transformation for Paul to write “that is what some of you *were*.”

I drove home wondering. What is the greater shame for a church: members who testify of radical transformation from degradation; or no adequate outreach or honesty of life struggles such that no one would write of us “that is what some of you were.”

Our church has always had a mixture of puss with purity. Our family histories include unfaithfulness and sexual bondage. Like the church at Corinth every generation of CMC members included some who were “thieves and drunkards and slanderers and prostitutes and...” I remember the shock waves in my own extended family when cousins confirmed a never before acknowledged half Aunt.

As with the society in which Paul ministered, our communities are filled with people in bondage to sin. Some churches give no welcome to “such characters.” Praise God Jesus and the Apostles acted differently. All who are washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus qualify for Paul’s declaration that they are now “saints”.

It remains my prayer that each of us would yield less and less to sin. That each of us would confront the areas of life that tend towards bondage so God’s Holy Spirit can clean us up and set us free. But it also remains my prayer that we would be abundantly gracious to sinners. That each of us would show the love of Christ to all around us so people might believe in a loving Heavenly Father whose Son can justify, sanctify and wash them.

The church was never intended to be a museum for saints. It was created by Jesus as a hospital for sinners. It was commissioned to be a work place where sinners who have

been set free in Jesus welcome and care for and nurture others who don't yet have the eyes to see their need for cleansing.

I praise God that our mission of joyfully living Christ's Story to benefit others means we welcome them at the door of grace. I am grateful for the evidence we are growing in this capacity with creativity. May we remain a hospital until the Lord returns! And may we grow to be a five star hospital using well the gospel tools of transformation.

Living His story with you, Pastor Bob Petersheim