

11 Pentecost  
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## “You’ve Got Mail”

In centuries past Christians and Christian churches strove to expand their influence throughout the world particularly to developing countries. That is no longer the case. It is no longer the case because many of those countries now have their own native clergy. The Christian population is often small, but in many developing countries our western influences including Christian churches are often discouraged by the government.

This has now been the State of Play for so long, that Christian leaders take it for granted that the developing world is not the place the church will grow. What has Christian leaders genuinely worried is that when the focus returned to the Old World and Europe and North America in particular, they have found that church, faith and religious practice is dying on the vine.

In England, where the church of England is the established church, 2% of Anglicans practice on a regular basis. Ourselves, we have seen a decline in faith, worship and participation in frontline churches across North America.

George g. Hunter of Asbury College states: “ninety nine percent of our mainline churches have little or no effective engagement with people in their communities who are not yet people of faith, hope and love. Unlike their forebears our churches main business is no longer ‘apostolic.’ We care for ‘our people’ oblivious to the fact that due to the secularization of the West, our churches are now placed in the largest mission field in the Western hemisphere and the third largest mission field on earth.”

Hunter goes on to say that churches that once had great influence and a contagious message have now members who are tongue tied when it comes to their faith, such that neither their children nor their friends are anymore aware of the dynamic role it has played in their life story.

He concluded that they are afraid because they equate witnessing to their faith with preaching. And they don’t want to do that.

This, I find strange, because when it comes to their politic views, my church friends send me e-mails after e-mail, videos galore and political cartoons that raise the hairs on the back of your neck.

In the last week I have discovered or rather my church friends have told me, that: I will never be operated on after 65; cannot receive a transplant; and if I need end of life advice from my doctor, he won't give it to me without charging me an arm and a leg.

In other words our health care and the freedoms of our democracy are on the way to hell in a hand basket. I should forward this e-mail to all my friends immediately if I love the USA.

My reaction is amazement because I'm nearly sure that I will still love the good old USA even if I don't forward the e-mail. Besides my list of friends is shorter than everyone else's listed. More, since I haven't read bill 3200 Health Care Reform, I have no clue as to who is right and who is wrong in all of this great debate. I just like to watch the news reports of the town hall meetings to see if any gratuitous violence breaks out. I keep wondering whether if anyone 200 lbs or more gets hurt, whether they have good health coverage.

However, my immediately instinct on reading my e-mails, is to fire off one of my own that starts:

"Are Jesus Christ and his Gospel of love a real part of your life? Do you ever feel that the stress of work, family and people weigh you down? Do you wish you would run away to a quiet place by yourself and have a long think, but responsibilities won't allow you to do so? Do you long for that friend who sticks by you in good times and bad and never lets you down? You may not know it now, but you need Jesus and his message in your life in a big way."

This would be a real good e-mail despite the fact that it doesn't have that political punch of declaring you un-American if you don't forward it.

Now I am not good at e-mail, as my few surviving friends will tell you, but "you've got mail" occurs in our lives each and every day because we do not belong to a dumb silent God, we belong to a chattering God who is forever communicating with us and leaving messages for us to find.

That chattering God speaks and intervenes in Solomon's life in our first reading. Solomon admits that he has not always walked in God's ways or in the ways of his father. He asks God for wisdom and discernment and God grants it to him. Solomon becomes renowned for his wisdom by people of many nations.

Wisdom has been gifted to us also through faith and the Holy Spirit. Why do we feel that we can inform people about a health bill we have not read, but at the same time we are afraid to speak about the Gospel, which we have all read and heard so many times that we truly are wise about it?

Relating the Gospel, Jesus and his teaching to real life is what I call genuine Christian Wisdom. There is enough genuine Christian wisdom among you on any given Sunday that would easily convert the entire population of Pennsylvania to becoming Christian and active followers of Jesus Christ. It is the largest untapped source of spiritual energy we have.

We need to unbind our tongues. We need to unbind the Gospel that resides in our hearts. We need to take the brass necked enthusiasm that allows us to send political e-mails even to our dearest friends and use that enthusiasm to bring others to a church that needs to proclaim Christ's message.

The truth of Evangelism is that we co-exist in a world with people who cry themselves to sleep, who feel unloved and unlovable and who do not know where to turn when the walls start closing in and their lives take on the stress of quiet desperation.

So what are you going to do? Are you going to keep your wisdom for yourself? Or are you going to share the joy that you feel knowing that Christ has brought friends to your door and love to your life? He has brought grace to your heart and forgiveness that brings you the sweet sleep of salvation?

“Be filled with the Spirit” says the letter to the Ephesians. Be wise in knowing where your salvation comes from. Share the treasure that you have found in the field with those who never find even the field.

In eight weeks time, you will have the opportunity to truly share with the entire community at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Milford Walkathon. It is easy to stand back and say “that is not my thing. I do not walk.”

Cancer is all our thing. Aids is all our thing. The debt on this ministry is all our thing. Imagine getting an e-mail from your Rector and you replying as follows:

1. This is a great Christian witness for our church; I will walk and take part.
2. I will walk all the way if the Rector does and I will seek out my own sponsors.
3. I can't walk but I will have someone walk for me and I will raise sponsorship money with them.
4. I can't walk; I can't give this worthy effort time. I will give money.

We will never become Evangelists and convince others of the truth, hope and love of our faith unless we are prepared to unbind our minds and hearts, rise from our pews and become the active Christians we know we can be. Do that and we will be releasing that genuine Christian wisdom we all have and the treasure in our hearts.

This year support the church's Milford Walkathon. Forward this to your friends and if you do, God our father will love you as he has always loved you, and will always love you for you are made in his image.

Amen+