

Melva's Corner

CALLING ALL PREACHERS!

(Are you carrying the message?)

July 24, 2006

(Romans 10:14-15)

Central Truth: We all have a message to deliver, we're all clergy called to bring the grace of God to His people.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have a message to deliver. You might doubt that evangelism is your strength, argue that others are far more capable of proclaiming the gospel than you, but that's just not true. I firmly believe that not everyone is gifted in preaching or teaching or writing or leading, but I just as firmly believe that all of us have someone in our lives who might only hear the gospel from us. **Specialization in the church, whatever good it might have done, has been the death of evangelism.** And it shouldn't be. We all have a message to deliver, we're all clergy called to bring the grace of God to His people.

The message is a fairly simple, straightforward one: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Oh, certainly it can do with some explanation and exposition – who is the Lord, what does it mean to call on Him? – but it isn't really very complicated at all. Our job is to deliver that message wrapped in the envelope of our own lives and personalities and experiences. After all, how can a person call on someone of whom they have not heard? How can they hear without someone to preach? And that someone is you.

But the church constantly grapples with the temptation to protect the message instead of delivering it – protect it from heresy, from skeptics, from the encroachment of the world's values. When we constantly debate it and argue about it amongst ourselves, we tend to have little time or energy left over for sharing it. And so we become a church that is well-acquainted with the technicalities of the message, but unable to talk about it with those who don't already know it like we do.

Or we categorize it, take it home and keep it sorted neatly into appropriate boxes. We can intelligently discuss theories of atonement and the nature of the Trinity, but rarely find ourselves talking with hurting, sinful people about what the gospel means for them.

I'm not interested in guilt trips here, because if I send anyone on a guilt trip on this particular matter then I have to travel with them. But I hope you will think about the message with which we've all been entrusted and the responsibility we have to deliver it. The conventional wisdom of the times in which we live says that we can't do that without being strident, obnoxious, manipulative and intolerant. Because of such behavior the world at large does not respond well when the message of Jesus is shared. That is as it's always been and it's only a comparatively recent development that the church is surprised a totally hostile response. None of that, however, changes our responsibility. Who can hear without someone to preach.

So ask God to give you opportunities to share the message and I have no doubt that you will have them. And when you do, swallow your anxiety and tell people why you love Jesus. Talk about what you know best – your experience with Him. That's what the church does for each other – we help each other deliver the message. Let's pray for opportunities for each other and let's pray for wisdom and words to communicate it well.

God will bless your efforts. The Spirit will lead you, even give you words. Let nothing stop you.

We are indeed ordained message carriers. And just like the United States Postal Service, neither rain nor snow nor . . . Oh well, you get the point, I hope.

Scriptural References:

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it

is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news." (Romans 10:14-15)