

Clippings

*Newsletter of Good Shepherd
Lutheran Church
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This month, I will be doing my patriotic duty as a citizen of the United States; I've been selected for jury duty with the District Court in Ionia County.

That's OK. I'm not telling you this so you'll feel sorry for me! It is a privilege to serve my community this way. The reason I mention this: I received detailed instructions for how to participate, including a line or two about "dress appropriately for Court." One of the rules is that I am not allowed to wear clothing with any kind of writing on it. [Haberdashery meets *habeas corpus*.]

It seems that what we wear is now no longer just considered a fashion choice, but protected speech, First Amendment-style. Since the role of jurors in a court of law is not to make statements, but to evaluate them, our First Amendment rights are temporarily set aside in this setting.

I guess I knew this about clothing... you hear about the occasional dust-up about something a student wears to school, etc. But I thought it was interesting that it wasn't just "political writing" on a T-shirt that is forbidden. It's any writing. It seems I am not allowed to endorse a sports team, promote my alma mater, advertise a pizza joint, quote a song lyric, or even say "**I'm With Stupid** →" in the courtroom.

This makes me think about how our very lives are "speech." And that's not just a Christian thing. Everyone silently communicates something about themselves, through their actions, their choices, through their very demeanor. We broadcast our values and our priorities through the ways we spend our time and the way we spend our money.

This is why Holy Scripture encourages us to examine ourselves before we participate in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. As 1 Corinthians 11:26 says, *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*. The word "proclaim" there is the same word that is elsewhere translated "preach." You preach a sermon when you come to the Lord's Table. You publicly proclaim that you are a sinner, that you believe Jesus' promise that His Body and His Blood are truly present in this bread and wine, and that you believe what the other Lutherans believe who are at the altar with you.

We do this outside of church, too. Paul wrote to Titus (chapter 2) detailed instructions that he called "sound doctrine": not meaning the Trinity, or salvation by grace through faith, but the practical living-out of Christian truth by people in different vocations: older men, older women, younger women, younger men, pastors, even slaves: ... *that the word of God may not be reviled. ...showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior*. We "wear our heart on our sleeve" by the way we live, speak, work, play. Let us live like the saved, forgiven sinners that we are, ruled by a gracious Lord and loved by a perfect Father.

James 2:12 (ESV)— *So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty*. May God teach us and enlighten us by His holy Word, to act in ways that conform to our speech, so that with our whole being we communicate the hope that we have!

~~Pastor Fremer