

Clippings

***Newsletter of Good Shepherd
Lutheran Church
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All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players ...

So spake The Bard, William Shakespeare. You are a player, an actor on a stage. You're not in speaking in *Hamlet* or dancing in *Cats*. This is more like "improv" in a drama class; the instructor gives you an assignment to improvise a series of actions and words to demonstrate, for example, an artist whose studio is over a bowling alley. The assignment: "Show us what it looks like to be that guy, trying to paint a bowl of fruit or whatever, while the pins are crashing right underneath him and shaking his canvas."

Our assignment as Christians is to demonstrate what it looks like to be a pardoned sinner, but it's not "acting," because that's what we are—death-row inmates who have been told we're free to go with a full acquittal! We live this out in front of the watching eyes of the world, admitting that we are sinful, rejoicing that we are forgiven, and naming Jesus Christ as the only reason this is true.

As you play your part, you speak the Truth, and you reinforce that message by the way you live. Jesus said you are the light of the world. We typically see this as a matter of personal evangelism (Christian jargon for telling others the Jesus story), but there is also the matter of "stewardship" (Christian jargon for how you manage someone else's stuff). The way you arrange your priorities reflects what your assignment is. Your checkbook and your day planner are wordless witnesses to the priorities in your life. The choices you make either confirm or contradict the message, and they tell what your life is *really* about. What's more, the *way you make those choices* exposes your core value system. Truth is only part of the performance; there's also Love. Love and Truth take turns helping each other in this performance.

There are a lot of choices that we have to make. The Bible tells us many things that are forbidden to us, and many things that are commanded of us... but there are many things that aren't on either list. Lutheran Christians believe that it's unwise to forbid, or command, something that Holy Scripture doesn't clearly address. In that space, in that gray area, we are expected to pray and seek God's will, and talk it over with other Christians, looking to benefit from their wisdom and experience. They may make other choices than ours. Here, our Christian witness mostly comes through in the way we handle such disagreements!

If your fellow Christian is doing something that you've already decided wouldn't be right, ask yourself: is he being disobedient to God, or is he sincerely trying to serve God according to the light of his conscience? If you can't point him to a clear passage in the Bible that requires him to repent, then you have to give him the benefit of the doubt, and judge his actions with charity. Let your zeal for the Truth be firmly rooted in God's Word, but in the zone of the in-betweens, where God hasn't clearly spoken, Love must lead.

That doesn't mean we give our approval to everything every misguided believer approves! In fact, Love requires us to challenge them to think it through, to pray about it. To do our best to win them over to our view of things—but, by the same token, to genuinely listen to them when they try to convince us that we are wrong, and to humbly pray about it. These things are too important to pass over with a "different strokes for different folks" hands-off attitude. Our zeal for the Truth says these opinions matter. Our commitment to Love says the people who hold these opinions matter.

May our Truth be clear, and our Love sincere!

~Pastor Fremer