

Lake Highlands Church

Sunday Assembly Reflection – 12/7/14

RECAP: The world is predictably polarized over many issues like race and religion, and unfortunately most Christians are among the most predictable. Sunday, Jim told the accounts of several men who demonstrated unpredictable friendship and peace to people they didn't agree with, and as a result lives were miraculously impacted. As followers of Christ, each one of us is called by God to extend the same unexpected peace toward everyone, friends and enemies alike. Jesus was not offended by those who dishonored Him, or those who showed no moral values whatsoever. So, why are we so quick to take up offense for Jesus or Christianity, and label people as enemies when He never did so Himself? Fear. Fear of people whose stories we have not actually heard for ourselves.

Two things I heard today were especially challenging. One was that we have “an enemy-loving God living inside of us.” The other was “Do we really know who Jesus is?” If I have trusted in Christ as Savior and Lord, then whose ideas about loving should my life reflect? They will know we are Christians by our love. Can I really take on the label of Christian and then redefine what that means? Or do I honestly think that Jesus is pleased for me to put labels on others instead of reaching out in friendship? In that case, I clearly don't know who Jesus is. And, what about the risks associated with showing an unpredictable act of peace today? What if, instead of the successful outcomes in Jim's examples, my gesture is rejected by the other as suspicious or with an ulterior motive? What if I'm judged as “soft on sin” or seen as dangerous myself for reaching out? Those are some of my rationalizations, what comes to your mind?

REFLECTION - choose at least one of the questions below to discuss in your small group, and be sure to pray for each other at the end.

- Think of someone in your workplace, neighborhood, school or even family with whom you disagree over an issue (big or small). What role do you think fear plays in you keeping your distance? How does Jesus see this person and what is He asking you to do differently in that relationship?
- Share a time when you were a peacemaker when you encountered a polarized conversation or situation. Were you able to demonstrate judgment and/or mercy? What was result?
- Share a time when you joined in on a divisive conversation, adding to the polarization. What belief drove your behavior? How might the “enemy-loving God” in you respond in the future?