

McCabe United Methodist Church
Our One, Common Job
Matthew 25:31-46: August 10 & 11, 2013
Pastor Rick Fossum

Maybe you heard about the McCabe family who invited their pastor to dinner one night. They were sitting at the kitchen table and the pastor asked the little boy, **“Son, what are we having for dinner?”**

The boy said, **“goat!”**

“Goat?” the pastor asked. **“Are you sure about that?”**

“Yep,” the boy replied. **“I heard my mom tell my dad, ‘Be home early. We’re having the ‘old goat’ for dinner tonight’.”**

Or, maybe you heard about the McCabe family who invited their pastor to their house for apple pie following a meeting. Sadly, they didn’t have any cheese for the pie. The little boy heard his mother apologize for not having any cheese (maybe it was the same little boy who talked about the *‘old goat’*). Anyway, the boy left the table and came back a minute later and put a piece of cheese on the pastor’s plate. The pastor ate the cheese, smiled and patted the little boy on his head. **“Thank you,”** the pastor said, **“you must have better eyes than your mom. Where did you find the cheese?”**

The little boy replied, **“in the mouse trap.”**

It’s good to be back from my vacation. I love this church, but it’s always good for the soul to get away for awhile. Nancy and I spent a lot of time with our two grandchildren which is the one thing we wanted to do.

Now, just because I was on vacation doesn’t mean that I stopped thinking about McCabe. I did a lot of thinking about this church especially about some of the questions you’ve been asking me and other members of our staff. Questions like **“Rick, how are you doing?”** I’m doing fine, thank you for asking. **“Are you able to keep up?”** Yes, so far. **“Is McCabe going to be alright?”** I think this transition is what McCabe really needs. And this question, **“how can I help?”**

It’s the last question that I’ve been thinking about the most. How can you help? How can you help this church thrive and grow into a strong and healthy future?

I know you know this, but I'd like to remind you that God has given all of us certain gifts and talents. Some of you have been given the gift of speaking in public. Some of you have been given the gift of singing or playing a musical instrument. Some of you have been given the gift of teaching and some the gift of gardening and some the gift of leadership. Plus many, many more.

All of these gifts are important to the church. We need you to put your gifts and talents to good use around here. But there is one thing all of us can do all of the time that will make a big difference in our future. We can all be hospitable. It's *our one, common job*.

Most of us have been to Wal-Mart, right? Have you noticed that whenever you walk through the door, there's almost always someone who half-way shouts at you, "**Welcome to Wal-Mart?**" And when you leave the store, there's someone else who will say something like, "**Thanks for shopping at Wal-Mart.**"

I look forward to that greeting. It doesn't matter to me if the greeting is sincere or not. Those greeters make me feel like I'm someone important. They really want me in their store. I like that feeling.

It's called hospitality. Hospitality can be defined like this: "**It's the act of welcoming, receiving, hosting, or entertaining guests.**"

The Shakers have the act of hospitality down to a science. They have a wonderful tradition that they use at the beginning of their worship services. It's their form of greeting or welcoming people. The people all stand and say to each other, "**The Christ in me meets the Christ in you.**" Would you say those words with me, "**The Christ in me meets the Christ in you.**"

Let's do a little exercise this morning. Let's take one minute, stand up and say those words to someone you don't know. Please stand, look around the room, and say to people you don't know or don't know well, "**The Christ in me meets the Christ in you.**"

Most of us are pretty good when it comes to greeting and welcoming people we know, but when it comes to people we don't know, it's a different story. Yet, this is *our one, common job*. We're all agents of hospitality. We're all greeters in God's church. It's not just the job of one or two of you. It's *our one, common job*.

From the moment someone parks their car in our parking lot on a Sunday

morning to the moment they walk into our building to the moment they leave, it's our job to make them feel welcome. We do that with our smiles and our words of greeting and our other acts of kindness and helpfulness. And it doesn't matter who they are or what they look like, greeting people is *our one, common job* and we all need to do it.

I Peter 4:9 gives us our marching orders. It goes like this: "*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*"

Romans 12:13 puts it this way: "*Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*"

And listen to this passage from Hebrews 13:2: "*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.*"

As Christians, hospitality is part of our job description. We 're called to greet not only our family and friends, but also the guests and strangers among us. Hospitality is a part of our basic Christian DNA.

I'm not sure if this story is true or not, but I think it makes an important point we need to hear.

There's a pastor named Jeremiah Steepok. You might have heard his story or read it on the internet. One Sunday morning, Pastor Steepok dressed up like a homeless person and he visited one of the largest churches in his city. It was a church with 10,000 members. Did I mention that he was to be introduced as the new head pastor of that church that same Sunday morning?

He arrived about thirty minutes early and walked around the church as a '*visiting homeless person*'. As people we're filing into the church, he noticed that only 3 people out of the 7-10,000 people in attendance that day said hello to him.

Again, pretending to be a homeless person, Pastor Steepok asked some people for change to buy coffee, but NO ONE in the church gave him change or coffee.

Before the service started, he walked into the sanctuary and sat down in the front of the church. Soon, he was asked by the ushers if he would please move to the back.

He greeted the people in the back of the church and they greeted him back with stares and dirty looks.

The service started. When the announcements were over, an elder of the church got up to introduce their new pastor.

“I would like to introduce to you Pastor Jeremiah Steepek,” the elder said. The congregation started clapping their hands, waiting for their new pastor.

Then, Pastor Steepek, still dressed as a homeless person, sitting in the back, stood up and walked down the aisle. The clapping stopped. ALL eyes were on him. He walked up to the altar, took the microphone, paused for a minute and then he read this passage of scripture:

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ‘The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’.”

After he read this passage, he looked at his new congregation and told them what he had experienced that morning. There was silence. Heads hung in shame.

Then, he said, **“Today I see a gathering of people, not a church of Jesus Christ. The world has enough people, but not enough disciples. When will YOU decide to become disciples?”** He then dismissed the service until the next week.

His point was clear, **“being a Christian is more than a name we claim. It’s a way of life . . . a way of living.”**

Hospitality . . . welcoming family and friends, guests and strangers is something we’re all called to do. You might say, it’s *our one, common job*.

This is my prayer, *‘May the Christ in you meet the Christ in all of God’s people.’*