

Do We Live Up To Our Reputation?

February 21, 2018

I skipped out on Presbyterian worship this past Sunday. I went to Catholic mass instead. My husband is Catholic, and we try to worship together in both Catholic and Presbyterian churches. I can worship pretty well as a covert Presbyterian during mass. I'm able to recite most of the liturgy, know when to stand or kneel, and will make the sign of the cross because it seems like a holy thing to do. I don't take Communion, of course. That's either a dead giveaway that I'm not Catholic, or perhaps other parishioners think I just didn't make it to confession, and I'm super devout about that.

This past Sunday, as I was trying to blend in, I got called out by the priest. Well, not me personally, but all Protestants.

Sunday's homily was a stewardship appeal for the parish and the archdiocese. The priest tried all the usual tactics: guilt, negotiation, praise. Then, he said, "I wish we were like Protestants who speak boldly about stewardship and tithing." Apparently this priest hasn't been covertly attending our Presbyterian worship services lately, as I do with Catholic mass. In Presbyterian worship, we speak about stewardship occasionally, but despite our reputation, I'm not so sure we do it boldly.

On March 6, at our Presbytery Gathering at Forest Park, however, we will speak boldly about stewardship, and particularly what it means to risk all for the sake of the gospel. (As a side note, have you registered yet? Stop reading this, and do it now before you forget again: [register](#). I'll wait for you to come back.)

Stewardship is not only a debate about how we spend our money. It's a question of what God is calling us to give of our lives. And, that calling is clear: we are asked to give everything, even our very lives, personally and corporately. "For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?" (NRSV Mark 8:35-36). We will explore this topic at the Presbytery Gathering by reflecting on Jesus' stewardship parables in worship, learning from participants recently returned from this month's NEXT Gathering, and celebrating the commissioning of Presbytery leaders to their new offices.

I'm not above trying guilt, praise, and negotiation to urge you toward even more faithful stewardship, but what I offer in return pales in comparison to the promise of the gospel: life. When we choose to go "all in," we find that we've lost nothing, but gained everything. How can we not be bold in proclaiming that?