



“So, what insights did you get?”

This is a question that Violet asks me quite frequently, usually after we have finished our daily Bible reading. But this time her question came while we were riding in the car on our way home from a few days spent in Door County, Wisconsin. It’s kind of been a ‘tradition’ to come home and share some “insights” whenever we have some time away. Violet was just curious what bits of wisdom I gained this time.

I shared some of those last week in worship, but there seems one that bears repeating:

Three years ago when we visited Door County (we’ve vacationed there several times), we came across an Irish-themed gift shop in one of the villages. It was located in what I termed “the tourist-trap village” - the one with the most shops geared to selling souvenirs to tourists. But the Irish place was not on the Main Street near all the other shops. It was off by itself at the top of a hill on a curve that was leading out of town. You had to make a special effort to stop there (not to mention that making the turn into their parking lot could be actually a bit dangerous given the location on a hidden curve).

This year as we drove into that town, I commented to Violet, “I’m guessing we will find the Irish place is no longer in business.” Given the aforementioned location issues I figured there was at least a 95% chance that I would be right.

You may have guessed that I was wrong. As we drove up the hill and came around the corner I fully expected to see some new business in that location. I was more than a little surprised. That our Irish store was still there, (“shocked” may be a more accurate word - that’s how convinced I was that it wouldn’t be in business).

It would be easy to toss in some “Luck ‘o the Irish” comment, but I don’t really think luck had anything to do with it. What I said to Violet was this, “I guess if you have good stuff that fills a need, people will find out about it and make an effort to seek you out.”

That little insight also applies to the Christian Church.

At some point during our stay in Door County, Pew Research (which has nothing to do with the furniture we sit on in worship) published their latest survey of spiritual beliefs in America. The big news in the survey was that over the last seven years the percentage of Americans considering themselves Christians has declined a full eight percent! That’s an alarming drop. That’s not a bump in the road but rather a HUGE decline trend. The natural response would be to make the same judgment about the Christian Church in our country that I had made about the Irish store in Door County: “Looks like it won’t be around long.”

We can prove that assumption to be wrong for the same reason I was wrong about the Irish place. When you have good stuff that fills a need people will find out about it and seek you out.

"Dark" seems to me to be a very appropriate word to describe both a country and the lives of individual people who are living without God. Without God there truly is no enduring purpose for life. There is no hope for anything after this life - and since "none of us makes it out of here alive," that's about as hopeless and dark as you can get.

But the Christian Church has the one thing people living in darkness need: Light. Light that cannot be extinguished by darkness (see John 1:5). Light that is Jesus Christ! And we have the Holy Spirit who empowers us to shine that Light to a dark world - the very Spirit of the God who showed He had defeated darkness when He rose from His grave!

Where is a light most visible - when surrounded by other lights or when shining in the darkness? The darker, more God-less our nation becomes, the more noticeable the Light of Christ.

Our challenge, as individuals and as a congregation, is to - as Jesus said - make sure we don't hide our Light under a bowl but rather to let it shine!

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net