



What do you think about Jesse Ventura?

This is a question I've heard a lot lately. You have probably heard it a lot too. I don't need to tell you what I think about Jesse. But as a Pastor in a Christian church, maybe I do need to help us reflect on what he said and remind us what kind of response is proper - and potentially life-changing.

First, his assessment of the church as a "sham and a crutch for the weak minded who need strength in numbers," is absolutely wrong. But we should not be surprised at that kind of assessment. God clearly tells us that Jesus Christ and his message seem foolish and weak in the eyes of the 'world':

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... for the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength... God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong." (1 Corinthians 1:18,25)

The things the world values will always be contrary to the things God values. In God's kingdom, true strength comes from admitting you need God, his forgiveness, his power and his people rather than from trying to pretend you are self-sufficient.

Secondly, our governor is not alone in thinking that the church "tells people to go out and stick their noses into other people's business." Although we would not put it this way, he is right. Jesus *has* called us to share the Good News of his love, forgiveness and gift of eternal life with all those we meet. He *has* called us to point out when others are on the wrong road, headed away from God and eternal life. I thank God for all the Christians who cared to "stick their noses in my business" to bring me to Jesus or back to Him.

The unfortunate part is that often when we point out other's faults, it is not with a genuine concern for their well-being, but with a "holier than thou" attitude.

Many people *have* gotten a bad impression of Jesus and his church from the hypocritical acts of the people in the church. Jesse's comments are a wake up-call for us to ask the Holy Spirit's power to make our actions match our words.

His comments also give us a chance to tell people what the church really is about: It is not a "country club" for the perfect, but rather a "half-way house" for "recovering hypocrite" (which we all are). The implication is that all of our lives each of us will have to fight the inclination to say one thing and do the opposite. But the other tendency is that *there is hope for recovery* - because our all-powerful God has the power to help us overcome our hypocritical tendencies.

Which brings me to the third (and maybe most important) point: Our governor has given Christians a HUGE opportunity to talk about our faith. Most of us feel uncomfortable bringing up the subject of faith - for all sorts of reasons. But when a public figure like Mr. Ventura brings up the subject and everyone is talking about it, we have been given "permission" to also talk about it.

Our challenge is to be *prepared* to give reason for the hope we have, to give the reason we belong to church. If we simply complain or agree with our governor's assessment, we have missed a great opportunity to share the gospel with someone we never would have had the chance to share with had the governor not said what he did.

Our governor's comments would seem to be a big negative for the church, but we need to remember that no matter who is in control of government, God is *the one really* in control. And God can take something horribly negative and make something incredibly positive come of it. Such is the case here.

Maybe one of the best ways to witness is when you are tempted to complain, pray instead. Pray for Jesse to see his need for God. Pray for God to give him wisdom in governing. Pray for his health and his family. And if you must complain - take it to the source, not your neighbor. Write him a letter or send him an e-mail and don't forget to tell him that you'll be praying for him and his family. God bless our governor and your witness!

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to <mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net>