

Gospel

Living the Gospel

Philippians 1:27-28

²⁷ Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing.

Matthew 20:1-16

¹For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; ⁴and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. ⁵When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" ⁷They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." ⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." ⁹When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹²saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." ¹³But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

L: May God add blessings to the reading and hearing of these words.

ALL: Thanks be to God! Let us pray: Amen.

There are LOTS of ways to get noticed. Different faith communities employ lots of strategies to create a buzz about their community. For some, it is sign strategy. My last congregation in North Carolina had a desire to put up a modern-looking marquee, complete with time, temperature, and pictures for those driving along their busy road. Another congregation I knew of took trees out of their front yard so the growing community nearby could see the building. And another church community made sure to put ads in the local newspaper each week giving details of what was going on in their congregation.

The best way to be known in a community however is a congregation's expression of love. The other parts of advertising are important, but not equally so. The buzz in a community comes from interacting with members or the ministries of a church.

Our passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians this week reminds the congregation then and now that how we LIVE the gospel we profess is the most important thing we can do, and this is how Paul will know how the congregation is doing. When you match Paul's letter with our passage from Matthew 20:1-16, it is a good reminder that we who follow the teachings of Christ are also committed to expressions of generosity in our community. Offering meals, sharing materials and help where it is wanted, supporting our community members when they are low or in need; these are all ways we 'share' who we are in this community.

Putting up signs and looking good as a congregation has its place; we DO want people to know where we worship so they might join us. But their very desire to join will be based upon our fruit as a congregation. Do we offer a physical expression of the grace, forgiveness and generosity we profess to believe and follow? I pray it may be so, and readily evident to all.

With love, Pastor Brian

“Grow Into Forgiveness!”

— Pastor Brian