

CRIBB<S>NOTE – SEPTEMBER 28, 2008

Going into the world to make disciples as Jesus instructed his faithful followers is not always an easy thing to do. Of course, as we study the ministry and teachings of Jesus, we realize very little of what Jesus expected of us is easy. We are pushed and encouraged to go beyond our comfort zones. Jesus calls us to go outside and face people where they are and bless them. We have decided to bless their pets also. Every creature comes from God.

We can become so accustomed to doing the same thing the same way all the time. But, Jesus wants us to shake things up. Break new ground and do new things. We are called to be surprised and to experience surprising joy. Although it is not easy, Jesus knows there is great reward in obeying his Great Commission.

A few weeks after entering Pepperdine College, I joined a group of students who went on a mission trip to Santa Barbara. Campus Crusade for Christ was a big organization at Pepperdine. We went all over Southern California as part of our understanding of being Christian. Our trip to Santa Barbara was a turning point in my life. It was not what the coordinators of the trip had in mind. Instead of converting the “heathen street people” who we perceived to have been lost in sin, I met some wonderful folk who invited me to spend time with them. That was my last Campus Crusade for Christ activity. I became a street person.

You just never know what will happen when you encounter the Holy in the most unlikely places. The welcoming spirit of those students and street people in Santa Barbara was a source of delight and great surprise. Whatever fears or timidity I harbored melted away. It was a great weekend along the California coast with former strangers. We exchanged stories and interests. Some of them had traveled across country during the spectacular events of the Civil Rights/Anti-War/Free Speech/Open Society era of the 1960s.

While those days may never return, we still have opportunities to “go and make disciples of all nations.” What does that mean? How do we do that?

First, it means to be faithful and obedient to God. There is nothing more important than God’s love for us. Divine affection is extended to every human being and living creature. The Apostle Paul reminds us, “Nothing can separate us from the love of God.” That is a very important message. Many people either don’t know that to be true or they have not given it much thought. God’s love often is expressed through people who are faithful and obedient.

We are called to love our neighbors. In a world begging, starving, desiring to be loved, we are the ones who must embody Christ by loving one another. That is why Jesus put so much emphasis on loving the unlikable, including our enemies and those who would do us harm. We have to practice our faith by loving people.

Second, Jesus’ instruction “to make disciples” means we are to encourage and assist people to become students of God’s Word. A disciple is a student; one who listens for the purpose of learning.

There is one other thing...a secret...I have learned over the years about getting outside and being involved in stuff that many folk just miss doing. Going into the world is lots of fun. Demonstrations, public witness activities, and basic trouble-making bring together some of the nicest people in the world. It really is a lot of fun.

We are not told to go out and make trouble; at least not at this time. We are sent from the sanctuary into the streets to share the good news of our “Blessing of the Pets” Sunday. It is an easy step on a journey to proclaim God’s love for all of us.