

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
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SEPTEMBER 25, 2011

SERMON: WHAT HAPPENS AT CHURCH SHOULDN'T STAY AT  
CHURCH!

TEXT: LUKE 10: 1-9

**After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'**

Be honest: do you watch TV?

One would imagine that most all of you do, at least some, but it is important because this sermon really started as a TV advertising campaign. If you do not watch TV then you may have a bit of catching up to do!

The Ad campaign that I am referring to has been and is very successful. At least I must assume so - why else would they continue to run it if it was not working? In some senses it is a very mild series of ads - much less racy or sensational than some others. But it contains a very sly message.

Which ad am I referring to? The series of ads promoting Las Vegas. The punch line is: "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!"

Have you seen them? I see them all the time. Either I watch way too much television or Vegas really likes to advertise on my favorite shows.

What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!" Catchy, but what does it mean? What sort of "things" does this imply?

Is it referring to matters of such great selflessness, kindness, generosity, and charity that you don't want your neighbors to know you are capable of?

Are hard-hearted, stoic, grumpy people going to Vegas to write big checks to Vegas churches, spend quality time with orphans and foster children, or volunteer in a hospital AIDS ward? Is that what people do in Vegas?

You have to tell me because I have never been!

But I do have a suspicion that "what happens in Vegas" refers to things that you would never, ever be caught doing in near home, where the people you know might find out!

No, I am not issuing a blanket condemnation of Vegas or the people who go to Vegas. I'm talking about the ad campaign - and the people who go there to live that campaign out to the fullest!

My suspicion is that the "things" the ad refers to are immoral, unethical, sexual, or illegal in nature. Things that folks would not come home and tell their Mom all about! Things that folk pray won't follow them home.

Am I wrong? Isn't that what is hinted at? The things people would never want their family or friends or employers to know about?

But that's not what I am going preaching about. You KNOW that nothing you do in Vegas or Tahiti or Hong Kong is really secret. God knows. God knows! And you know that God knows - so I don't need to talk about it. Because you know you what sin brings to the sinner!

So if I am not here to condemn sin and sinners, then what am I preaching about?

Well, it could be about theft of intellectual property because I am stealing the Vegas ad and twisting it to my nefarious purposes.

Actually not nefarious. Nefarious means "criminal or wicked." My purposes are neither. But it sounded so cool and ominous at the same time. Forgive me.

Back to the theft. My twisted version of the campaign is: "What Happens In Church Shouldn't Stay In Church!"

Yes, yes, it's not as witty and the rhythm is all wrong but think about it.

"What Happens In Church Shouldn't Stay In Church!"

What sort of things happen in church?

I hope you don't have a bushel basket full of examples of immoral, sexual, illegal, or unethical things that have happened here!!! If you do and you're still here - we need to talk - this week. Because those are not the sorts of things that people go to church expecting are wanting!

What ought to be happening in Church are acts of:

- Love and Acceptance
- Mercy and Forgiveness
- Justice and Righteousness
- Friendship and Mutual Support
- Wisdom and Faith
- Peace and Hope

I don't pay you to come here and listen to me. I'm not sure I will ever have enough money for that! There is no law that says you are required to be here. And our culture is bending over backwards to tell people they don't have to go to church. So if you come - I have to imagine that you want to be here - want to be here because you get something worthwhile.

What is it for you?

- Is it the wonderful personal relationships you have here?
- Or the sense of peace you have in this sanctuary?
- Or the healing forgiveness you have received here?
- Or is it unconditional love that flows through this place?
- Or....you'll have to tell me!

What goodness is it that you find or seek here?

Wait...I had a scripture when I stood up to preach I had a scripture. A story about Jesus' sending 70 of his followers out, two by two, into all the villages of that part of Judea.

Jesus goes on and on about what they are **not** to take with them: **Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.**

I could preach a fine sermon on that. I did, once or twice. But not today. I want you to remember what they did take with them! They took the word of God, the Good News of Jesus, and the promise of the Kingdom of God. They also took with them the love and mercy they had received from Jesus and the fellowship they had developed as disciples of Jesus.

Come to think of it...they brought a lot with them on that trip - no wonder they didn't have room for bags, purses, or even greetings. They had a lot they brought to share! And their mission was one of sharing these things with anyone who would receive them. Anyone! Not just the people who looked like them or shared their political opinions or could tell a good joke. Anyone.

They were sent out with a mission. What about us? Are we...pew potatoes? Or are we missionaries who gather weekly for encouragement and enrichment and fellowship?

God has blessed us. We have found faith and love, fellowship and forgiveness, compassion and goodness - right here. But what are we going to do with what Jesus gives us?

Are we to be like Vegas? Are people to sneak away from church hoping that what they did here will stay here - never to be known by friends and family and colleagues? As if we are ashamed of it!

Or are we fulfilled by what we receive here and proud of what we do here? Grateful and proud enough to share the good news?

What will you do this week?