

Pastor's Corner – 10-06-2018
Christ's Method Alone – He Mingled

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." – Ministry of Healing pg 143.

I am a self-diagnosed introvert. Contrary to the belief of many, this does not mean I'm broken, it doesn't mean I'm incapable of interpersonal interactions, and it doesn't disqualify me from serving as a pastor. All it really means is that social interactions, especially ones with a lot of superficial conversation (small talk) tend to drain my energy. Extroverts get jazzed up by those kinds of settings. We introverts can power through but we need to recharge in a corner all alone for a while afterwards. So for the introvert, Christ's method of evangelism poses a particular challenge. His first step was to mingle.

Jesus definitely appeared to be a "people person." He was comfortable with crowds and with small gatherings. He flowed easily through the various strata of social hierarchy, able to engage with wealthy lawyers and penniless widows with equal grace. He could play with little kids and discuss theology with the grey-beards. Jesus was almost always in the presence of people.

This, of course, became an area of contention between Jesus and the Pharisees. They were always on the lookout trying to find things to criticize Jesus about and this was an area that they honed in on.

In one instance, recorded in Mt 9 Jesus attends a party hosted by Levi-Matthew, the tax collector. Matthew was friends with all kinds of disreputable types (sinners and fellow tax collectors) and so it was a bit of a scandal that Jesus decided to attend a party hosted by this infamous cheat. The Pharisees were quick to jump on it and asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your master eat with sinners and tax collectors?!" The implication was clear, if Jesus was a righteous person he would know he needed to distance himself from the riffraff. He should steer clear of such unholy venues.

In another instance, Jesus is having dinner with Simon, a prominent Pharisee who had been healed by Jesus of leprosy. During the course of the meal a woman who was known to be of questionable character snuck in and poured an expensive bottle of perfume on Jesus' feet. She wept as she poured out the oil then went so far as to dry his feet with her hair. It was an act of love performed by a sinner towards the one who had forgiven and saved her. Simon was having none of it.

He shook his head and wagged his finger and said, "If this man were really a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. He would know she is a sinner and would have nothing to do with her!" Jesus then told a parable about forgiveness that promptly put the Pharisee in his place.

In Luke 7 Jesus contrasts himself with John the Baptist. He said, "John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and 'sinners.'"

Jesus was neither a glutton nor a drunkard but he was accused of being both because he had a tendency to hang out with people who were. His reputation was of someone who spent a lot of time rubbing shoulders with the wrong kind of people. Everyone knew Jesus could be found in places that no respectable religious leader should ever be found in.

All this is to say that Jesus truly did mingle with the people. He didn't just sit back in the temple or synagogue and wait for sinners to come to him. He went to where they were.

This is an essential component of Jesus' method of evangelism. He is the good shepherd who will leave 99 behind to go and find the one that is lost. He doesn't wait for the lost sheep to wander home on their own. No, he goes out to find them.

Ellen White emphasizes that Christ “mingled with men as one desiring their good.” That means that he didn’t expect anything from them. He didn’t approach them with his own personal agenda. He met them where they were at. When he mingled, he didn’t do it to condemn, or to change. He simply did it to make connections and build relationships. He mingled with them so that they could meet him, see what kind of man he was, and begin to build a rapport.

Sometimes as a church we wonder why we aren’t growing. We wonder why God isn’t bringing new sheep into the fold. Well, if Ellen White is to be believed, the only way that will happen is if we follow Christ’s method. And the first step in his method is to mingle – not with each other – but with the un-churched.

Most Adventists, who have been Adventists for any length of time, have their entire friend base within the church. If they are going to mingle it’s going to be with fellow Adventists. Jesus, by contrast, left the religious people behind and went out of his way to mingle with the lost. If we are going to follow in our savior’s footsteps then we need to push out of our comfort zone and start rubbing shoulders with the un-churched.

On Nov. 9 and 10 our church will be going through a workshop that is designed to help you discover how to apply Christ’s method in your own life. Through the Awaken workshop (and later a second one called Activate) you will get a chance to explore God’s leading in your past and discover how your life experiences have uniquely gifted you to make a difference in this world. You will learn to listen for God’s calling and even take the first steps towards mingling with men as one who desires their good.

If this sound good to you and you want to be a follower of Christ’s method, make sure to register and attend both Awaken and Activate. You can register by calling the church office or by signing up at church.

Happy Sabbath,
Pastor Tyler