

The Most Ridiculous Job in the World

April 3, 2016

Holy Humor Sunday

The new pastor was so nervous at his first service that he could hardly speak. Before the second week in the pulpit he asked one of his colleagues how he could relax. She said, "Next week, put some vodka in the water pitcher. After a few sips, everything should run smoothly."

The next Sunday, the new pastor put the suggestion into practice and was able to talk up a storm and felt just great. Upon returning to his study, however, he found a note from the president of the church council.

The advice was, "Sip," not "Gulp." There are 10 Commandments, not 12. There are 12 Disciples, not 10. David slew Goliath, he didn't beat the snot out of him. We do not refer to Jesus Christ and his Apostles as "J.C. and the boys." We do not refer to the cross as "The Big T." The preferred way of saying grace is not Rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the grub, Yea God!" And finally, we do not refer to the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost as "Big Daddy, Junior and the Spook."

No one said it's an easy job, In fact, pastoring is the most ridiculous job on earth. If only I could come closer to being the perfect pastor.

The perfect pastor preaches exactly three minutes and gives a detailed exposition of the whole Bible. He condemns sin roundly but never hurts anyone's feelings. He works from 8am until midnight and is also the church janitor.

The perfect pastor makes \$40 a week, wears good clothes, drives a good car, buys good books, and donates \$30 a week to the church. He is 29 years old and has 40 years' experience.

The perfect pastor loves working with teenagers, and he spends hours and hours with the senior citizens. He smiles all the time with a straight face because he has a sense of humor that keeps him seriously dedicated to his church.

He makes 15 home visits a day and is always available in his office. The perfect pastor never misses the meeting of any church organization and is always busy evangelizing the unchurched.

Unfortunately, the perfect pastor is always in some other church. But what do you expect from the most ridiculous job on earth!

Now I will be serious for a few minutes. If pastoring were a job, it *would* be the most ridiculous job on earth. I can't imagine why anyone would take such a job.

Pastors are shepherds over God's flock. "*Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers,*" Paul writes to the church elders at Ephesus, "*to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son*" (Acts 20:28). I can barely manage myself. I don't know how in the world I could ever be responsible for the rest of you!

It gets worse. The "Perfect Pastor" list pales in comparison with the real New Testament list. Paul gives these marching orders to his pastoral protégé, Timothy: "*Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love,*

and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart,” Paul commands. Sort of a killjoy, don’t you think?

But there’s more. *“Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.”* I sometimes wonder if Paul ever served a real church. *“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness.”* If I read this stuff too often, it makes me want to apply for a job as a WalMart greeter!

Then there is the atomic bomb of pastoral responsibilities. *“Think of us in this way,”* Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians, *“as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries.”* All things considered, most days I’d rather be fishing.

It’s the most ridiculous job in the world.

Fortunately, it’s not a job at all. It’s a vocation. It’s a calling from God by the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. I have found it to be the most ridiculous job in the world. And I find it to be the most wonderful vocation in the universe.

I was taught to be a “2-Cor-4” pastor. That’s a reference to Paul’s words in Second Corinthians, chapter four.

“Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry,” Paul says in verse one, *“we do not lose heart.”* When I remember that this vocation is a gift of God’s mercy, I keep things straight in my head and my spirit.

“For we do not proclaim ourselves;” he continues in verse five, *“we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake.”* When I remember that this is about Jesus and not about me, then things go well in ministry.

My favorite part comes in verse seven: *“But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.”* Whenever I get too impressed with my own performance, the Holy Spirit arranges for a dose of humility therapy. Unless I remain clear where the real power is, I am in danger of getting a church job and leaving the church’s ministry.

And it’s important to remember why pastors do this stuff. *“Yes, everything is for your sake,”* Paul concludes, *“so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.”* The office of ministry is a tool the Holy Spirit uses to create and sustain faith in Jesus. And some of us in that office are real tools!

It’s the most ridiculous job in the world. Thank you for allowing me to live out the most wonderful vocation in creation.

Let’s pray...

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