

We All Are Ministers

Luke 9:10-17

By Zachary Stefaniuk August 18, 2019

Good morning everyone. It feels good to be back here at OMC with all you wonderful people. I have missed the singing and getting to see each of you every week. I would like to spend the first portion of my time telling all of you about my pastoral internship with Warman Mennonite. After that, we will move into examining the biblical text that Katherine and Stephanie so wonderfully acted out.

My summer with Warman Mennonite has taught me many lessons. One of the most important lessons was how there are multiple forms of ministry. For example, being a pastor is the most traditional definition of ministry. In this form of ministry, pastors are able to help people develop deeper understanding of biblical texts and principles.

Another form of ministry is building relationships and community with those in your church family. One day about a month ago, I was at work in Warman when Wayne and Belinda (a couple who are on the spiritual care committee) came into the church to drop off some paper work for mail boxes. Shortly after they arrived, another man came to the church. His name was Archie. Archie has a drinking problem and was drunk when he came into the church. I am told he often came to Warman Mennonite to grab some food. He also is a compulsive liar who will say what people want to hear.

He once asked a congregant to give him a ride to Rosthern after church. He got the ride then said that since they were already half way to Beardy's, they might as well go all the way.

Wayne, Belinda, and I prayed for Archie then the other two gave him a ride to the South access to Osler. I am so grateful that Wayne and Belinda were at the church when Archie showed up. If they were not there, the interaction could have gone very differently. In this interaction with Archie, I was introduced to one of the more difficult aspects of ministry. That is giving help and prayers to those who need it most, even if I am not comfortable around them.

We all are called to pray for those who persecute us and those who support us. While Archie did not persecute me, this spectrum shows that we are supposed to pray for anyone we can think of, regardless of our relationship with them.

Wayne and Belinda taught me this. They taught me that there will be unexpected uncomfortable encounters with people at the least expected times. They showed me how I can support those who may be difficult to deal with at times. Another lesson that came from this experience is that prayer can be all a person needs at times.

A couple weeks ago, I was a sponsor at the Shake: Rattled by the Radical Youth Conference. Since I was a sponsor for OMC and only Braden came, I had room in my group for a couple more youth. These two youth were Tyreese and

Nicholas. One day, Nicholas woke up to an incredibly sore back. It was so sore that he was hardly able to walk. Thankfully, there was another adult there who was trained in Thai Massage Therapy. They graciously agreed to using their career to help Nicholas' back heal. Through the stretches and yoga used, Nicholas made a remarkably full recovery within a day.

This trained Massage Therapist is a friend of mine who has known me my whole life. One day after lunch, we got talking and they were surprisingly open about their past with the church. They once were a pastor, and like many others felt that they wanted to find something else to do as a career. On a trip to Thailand, they learnt about the art of Thai Massage Therapy and decided they would get certified as a Thai Massage Therapist.

They now run a Thai Massage business in Saskatoon. After each session, they offer coffee and tea to the client. It is through this coffee and tea time that they feel like a minister. Now, their creative juices are flowing once again.

This story was so powerful. I had no idea that this person went through so much spiritually that they were not able to go to church for a while. Yet, they still had a strong relationship with God. They showed me that ministry can be found in many jobs. If one looks for it, they can probably find a way that they are doing the work of God through their jobs.

All this is to say that the most important lesson I learnt from the past four months is the importance of all people in the church and how a priesthood of all believers helps enrich the bigger Church. Now, on to the actual sermon.

The scene that Katherine and Steph acted out is taken from Luke 9:10-17. The text is actually related to what I have been learning over the summer. The miracle of the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle to appear in all four gospels. Why this is the only miracle to appear in all four Gospels is hard to say. Perhaps, it was to emphasize the importance of eating together as a community of believers. Or, maybe each of the four authors heard the story told to them and found it so amazing that they had to put it into their Gospel.

In every telling of the miracle, there was a recurring theme. Jesus was using his disciples who had just come back from their own ministries to help with his ministry.

The feeding of the 5000 emphasizes that we all have a role to play in the church. Whether it be speaking the words that we have written, serving the food we have been given, or harvesting the food to share. We all have a purpose in the Church. Or, to put it in other words, a priesthood of all believers.

This miracle also calls Christ followers to be servant leaders. It was the disciples who served the crowd. The crowd probably was full of people who were used to doing everything for themselves and serving more important people.

However, in this scenario it is the important people who serve everyone else. The disciples lead by example. In serving everyone their food, the disciples showed people that sometimes being a Christian means making yourself less powerful, and making everyone feel like equals.

Something interesting about Luke's telling of the miracle is it happens right after the disciples return from their ministries. What makes this interesting is we are told nothing about the disciples' missions. They leave at the beginning of Chapter 6 and four verses later, they return. Then, Jesus wants to take the Disciples aside to have a debriefing about how their missions went. But crowds appear and prevent this from happening.

It seems to me that this is suggesting that when we are taking part in ministry, we need to do it in relation to Jesus and publicly. Jesus needs to be part of our ministries because his teachings are centered around showing his followers how to be Christian leaders in their communities. Our ministries also need to be public because if they are private, then no one will know about it. If we want a successful ministry, we need to be public about it.

Jesus plays an interesting role in this miracle. It is Jesus who performs the miracle itself, but I get a sense that he is a back-seat driver in this case. He just sits there teaching people and letting the Disciples determine what and when food and shelter are needed. Jesus simply replies with, "Do it yourself". In saying this, he

puts the Disciples in the driver's seat and Jesus just tells them what to do. In that way, Jesus is a successful back seat driver. But unlike most situations with a back-seat driver, the Disciples who are the driver in this case actually listen to the back-seat driver who in this case is Jesus.

In this miracle, there are many people who contribute to the good of everyone else. Most obviously, Jesus teaches those present. He shows them what it means to be a part of the family of God.

Then, there are the Disciples. They act as crowd control and get everyone ready to eat. It seems that they are the organizers of a conference gathering and Jesus is the guest speaker. It is up to the Disciples to make sure that everyone is comfortable and that the crowds needs are provided for. They could be taking care of this so that Jesus does not have to.

One group that is often overlooked is the people who brought the bread and fish. They played an important part because without the food, no one would have been fed. Who would have thought "Hey, I should cook two fish before I go see Jesus." Or "You know what, I will bake five loaves of bread to share." Clearly, not many people thought of this since there were over 5000 people at the gathering. My theory is that God called those people to make the food. In calling people to bring food, God allows Jesus to show everyone his great power.

What does all this have to do with my practicum? Well, in both instances there are underlying themes of a priesthood of all believers. Farmers, speakers, and administrators can all find their place in the church. I have seen this through all the congregants at Warman Mennonite. There was a baptism during the summer. At this baptism there was a wide variety of people getting baptized. There was an Indigenous biker, a teenage girl, and a father who had been raised in the congregation. These three vastly differently people were all united for one purpose that day, to commit themselves to living God filled lives.

Similarly, OMC is full of diversity. I find that something special about OMC is that we as a congregation do our best to make OMC a home for people of varying abilities, nationalities, etc. This is displayed through our easily wheelchair accessible building, refugee supporting, and how open we are to new people regardless of who they are.

This is what it means to be a part of a priesthood of all believers. To welcome people of all backgrounds and all skills into the family of God. So, I challenge every one of us to find our place in the church and how we can help others find their place.