

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 5/23/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, May 24 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for greater commitment to mission of God in the world. Ask for greater clarity for God's will. Ask for the removal of temptation. Pray to the Holy Spirit for a passion to God's will.*

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Years ago, the church my aunt attended was looking for a new pastor. The congregation met to discuss what they wanted and did not want in a pastor. It was a time when women serving as pastors was relatively new to the Lutheran Church. That, however, was not an issue for this congregation. One person did speak up about his feelings. He said very clearly, "I do not want someone who has a beard." My aunt quickly replied saying, "I guess that rules out Jesus."

A professor at the seminary I attended had once been arrested with others for protesting about the expanded proliferation of nuclear weapons. He spent the night in jail. It led me to wonder if a congregation would call a pastor who had a criminal record. Jesus did.

I know of a pastor who has a passion for ministering to prostitutes. He often goes to where they hang out in the evenings, waiting for a "John" to pick them up. This pastor tries to let them know that they are loved of God and to invite them to come to church. Would you want such a pastor? (Or a prostitute as a church member, for that matter?) Jesus spent time with prostitutes.

Last week I told how my internship supervisor had been questioned by members of his church council about why he had gone into a bar. This congregation did not approve of drinking alcohol in any measure except for Holy Communion. He had gone into that bar to support a recovering alcoholic who was feeling tempted but couldn't reach his sponsor. What behaviors would disqualify someone from serving as your pastor? Jesus went to places where proper people would not go.

Jesus did a lot of things that angered the religious leaders of His day. His behavior—the people with whom He spent time, the place to which He went, what He allowed and encouraged His disciples to do—did not sit well with those who led the church of that time and place.

Yet we name ourselves followers of Jesus. More often than not, we see ourselves doing this within the normalcy of our regular lives. We don't expect that our discipleship will call us to do things that are outside our comfort zone. And while I'm not advocating for any particular action that might challenge us, seem perhaps risky, or make us uncomfortable (not right now, anyway), I do want to say that discipleship might one day lead us to places that cross the boundaries of what we envision as normally for ourselves and our church. Jesuit priest, poet, and activist Daniel Berrigan once said, "If you want to follow Jesus, you better look good on wood."

Where are you willing to go to follow Jesus? What are you willing to do? With whom are you willing to sit? Most of us likely will never have to answer these questions in the extreme. But I think they are good questions to consider as we think about our commitment to Jesus and to the Kingdom of God. How far are you willing to go to follow Jesus?

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey