

**“All go to one place, all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. “ Ecclesiastes 3:20**

Just recently I heard a pastor refer to their pastoral business as “sprinkling Pastor dust” upon those who need to hear and feel a little hope in their faith. As they went along their day from home visits to hospital visits he said, “Well, sprinkled some pastor dust there!” This is a rather cynical way of saying that some feel that pastors carry some type of holiness, sanctity or spiritual presence and hope when they come to visit.

When I have heard of dust in the Bible, it usually is on the case of some form of death or finality. But it is kind of interesting that sometimes it feels like people think we pastors bring some form of piety or holiness implying that God was now there if the Pastor arrives. And my simple role at a hospital bed, a family meeting, or a wedding tends to have that same concept as sharing “pastor dust.”

Really, when I arrive at these places throughout my daily schedule what IS my role? I can try to compare myself to Jesus ministry as he travelled from town to town bringing a presence not only for physical healing but joy and happiness through his very presence. Yes, I know that this is an important part of ministry... to be present for people. But is this also the role of every Christian... to sprinkle the dust of heaven in the presence of those who need to feel God’s presence.

I have to admit that even though Pastor’s are supposed to be able to carry this role all the time, but there are moments of discouragement that can be overwhelming. The role of Pastor can be overwhelming because it is more than a schedule of things “to do” or a job description to meet. It is easy to measure the tangible such as the number of baptisms, church growth, intriguing sermons, Bible studies, and ceremonies. But for the majority of time, the role of a pastor is hidden from view and from measurement.

This is hard for people to understand. I had a professor of mine once literally tell me that Pastor’s should not be a pastor unless you cannot, NOT be one. In other words... the call to ministry is powerful and extremely complicated and difficult. Last week I heard that I must once again endure the annual Pastoral review as required by our congregation’s constitution. In my 23 years of ministry I think I have had only a handful of these ever done and they are a difficult to do well even though they are meant to “mean well.”

On this subject, one pastor wrote, “you see, there is a miracle that takes place on a regular basis. With all my shortcomings and inadequacies, when I walk into that emergency room where the family is waiting to hear news of their loved one, there is often a sigh of relief: “ Oh Good, the pastor is here.” There is a presence a pastor brings that fills me with a sense of wonder. “

Yes, I bring to the role of ministry the presence of comfort, and a sense of nearness of God, an assurance that God has not forsaken people during trial or sorrow or even joy. My called role is to instruct, counsel, encourage, rebuke, guide, shepherd, and love to show Christ’s grace to the flock... you. I am not the presence of God, but I represent grace and caring, forgiveness and comfort.

Yes, this is difficult and challenging. Am I adequate for the task? Well, yes... I accepted the call you extended to me....and no. This is what makes ministry such a humbling, awe-filled vocation - to experience and to understand awareness of the Holy Spirit at work through such a being as me. Yes... you called me here to sprinkle the “dust of heaven” onto your lives. Now, can I rely on you to do your part as the Christian followers of Christ? How shall we measure that one? AMEN