

The Road Less Traveled – December 2, 2016

If you missed the Deck the Halls Chili Cook-off and Hanging of the Greens worship service on Sunday, you really missed a great time. I'm not sure how many people crowded in to the Fellowship Hall, but it was standing room only as folks made their way around the room to sample more than a dozen different types of chili. But the highlight of the evening was when we gathered in the Sanctuary for the Hanging of the Greens worship service. I always get chills as I watch our children get our house ready for company. Wreaths were hung from the Communion Rail, all the pieces of the Nativity found their way to the altar, and practically every branch on the Sanctuary tree is now home to a Chrismon.

It wasn't just that we decorated. We prepared ourselves and our house to tell the story of Christ. We prepared a place that will help others experience Christ in the coming weeks. And there is real power in that.

But something else was happening as we went about our work in the Sanctuary. Someone else was busy down the hall.

I didn't become aware of it until everyone had cleared out after the service. I told my family goodbye and then went down to the Fellowship Hall to clean up from the chili supper. Except there was practically nothing to do. While the rest of us worshiped, someone (or several someones) cleaned up. The tables had been put away, the chairs folded and stashed, and all the trash bagged and taken out. All that was left for me to do was to run a quick broom over the floor and head home, much sooner than I had anticipated.

I found myself wishing I knew who had performed those tasks so I could thank them. I was deeply appreciative of the gift of an early departure. But the more I thought about it the more I realized that it had nothing to do with me. Whoever cleaned up the Fellowship Hall didn't do it for me; they probably had no thought that I would be the one staying to clean up. Instead I suspect they did it because they felt a call to serve. To do something that didn't benefit themselves in any way, but served God. And by serving God, whoever cleaned up blessed me.

It is an apt reminder of the nature of Christian service. We do a lot of things as a church that help people. We feed hungry families and make sure elementary school students do not stay hungry. We do all manner of work for residents in other cities, other states and other countries. We are a safety net for people in our area experiencing hard times. We build wheelchair ramps for those who are prisoners in their own home. We open our campus to those who are struggling with addiction and those simply struggling with life. And in each of those cases, someone benefits. Sometimes we don't even know their names, but they benefit nonetheless.

But we aren't serving them. It's not about them. It's about Christ and the call we feel to serve Him, both as individuals and as a church. We serve Christ by serving others, but it's Christ that we choose to serve. And in the process of serving Christ, people are blessed, lives are changed, and a world takes a step closer to a Kingdom.

Cleaning up after a meal may seem like a little thing, but it's not. It's a great example of what it means to serve. And a great reminder of who we serve. As you say yes to Christ today, someone will be blessed. You may not know them. You may not even be aware of it. But someone will be blessed because of your "yes." That's the true power of faith.

See you Sunday.