

The Road Less Traveled – February 17, 2017

I read this week that the 53rd annual Grammy Awards was the most-watched show on television Sunday night, with some 26.5 million people tuning in. I was not one of them.

I don't like awards shows; never have. I really can't explain why. They just hold no interest for me. I love movies, but I don't watch the Oscars. I watch television, but I loathe the Emmys. And though I constantly listen to music, the Grammys don't appeal to me in the least.

That said, I always hop online the day after the Grammy Awards to see who won. It's not that I care that much about the contest, I just like to see how many artists' names I recognize. It says something about my coolness factor, you understand. So on Monday I pulled up the first story I could find about the Grammys, but it didn't say much about the winners. Instead it focused on the technical problems and how upset people were about them.

The act that promised to bring the house down was a pairing of the heavy metal band Metallica and pop sensation Lady Gaga, fresh off her Super Bowl halftime performance. The performance was everything that was anticipated: tremendous energy, fire, heart-pumping music. The only problem was that the microphone for Metallica front man James Hetfield didn't work. Throughout the early part of the performance, Hetfield would approach the mike and pour everything he had into the lyrics, except no one heard him. Eventually he and Lady Gaga shared a mike, and by the end, Hetfield's microphone did actually work. But through much of the song, his part of the message got lost.

The sad part about the whole thing is that the performance was incredible. I watched the video of it the next day. But no matter how great it looked, no matter the energy that was poured into it, viewers didn't fully experience it because the message wasn't delivered. And without a message, a song can quickly deteriorate into, well, noise.

I think that's not only true for musicians on stage, but for followers of Jesus Christ doing life. We spend a tremendous amount of time in the church talking about what it looks like to live out our faith, to make our belief real and tangible. We do that in a variety of ways, but the most visible way we do it is by serving others. We offer food to those who are hungry through our Manna Room. We ensure that school children do not spend the weekend hungry through our Snack. We build wheelchair ramps every month for people whose mobility issues have made them prisoners in their own homes. We go on mission trips, serving those in need in Texas and beyond. And so on.

And it's good work. There is a tremendous amount of energy and love and passion in it. But there also is a message that needs to be communicated. That message is what makes it holy work. Without the message, it's just work.

What's the message? The message is the "why" behind the work. Why do we feel compelled to do it? Why do we feel a call to help others?

The "why" is Jesus. And the "why" too often goes unshared.

In church circles, evangelism is the watchword of our times. It literally is that which can make or break a church. But evangelism isn't just about inviting people to church. At its foundation evangelism is about sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. And not just the traditional "let me tell you how Jesus died for your sins." But rather, "let me tell you how Jesus is working in my life. Let me tell you why I choose to follow Christ. Let me tell you why I am spending my time doing *this*."

That's the message. That's the Good News. That's our story.

We just have to be willing to tell it.

See you Sunday.

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