

Words for an Emerging Church

Wednesday, August 25, 2021

Lessons In the Parking Lot

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. —Romans 8:28

August gifted St. Luke's with another great parking event fund raiser. The Lititz Craft Show fills the town's streets with vendors and shoppers, and we are just a block away from the action, giving us a golden opportunity to fill our parking lot and fields with cars. The event is a bit of a workout as I am one of the runners who scouts out empty spaces as the lot begins to fill and guides cars on their way. I can always use the exercise, we raise a lot of funds, I meet a host of great people, and I always learn new lessons on these days. Allow me to share a little of my parking lot education.

The parking event is a great reminder of how wonderful it is when leaders know what they are doing! The ladies by the street had their signs up, were collecting donations and were welcoming guests like the true pros that they are. And what a relief to see that the traffic directors were an experienced team. It is not as easy as one may think to arrange vehicles in a grid that will fill our space and always allow for easy egress. This year's event set me to thinking about God's watching over and directing the Kingdom. God has a master plan and there is plenty of room for everybody. Even when all the spaces appear to be filled, there always seems to be space to be found—and often in some interesting corners! (Most years we fill the lot and must occasionally put up a "lot full" sign, but this year we just barely managed to keep all the customers coming and did not need to raise the sign.) What a comfort to know that God always has a special place for each of us, even when the world may seem crowded, and we may fear being lost and excluded.

While our traffic directors were lords of the lot for a few hours, capably directing the grid, they reminded me that running the show with careful precision need not make them into insensitive tyrants. A few folks came with requests regarding where they did or did not wish to be parked, and as far as I could tell, all these requests were honored. I directed one nervous soul to a space a bit removed from the pavement and between two large tree trunks. It was a wonderful shady spot. This older driver was a bit unnerved by the rustic setting, so I gladly directed her to other accommodations. This was a pleasant reminder of how God bears with us in our fears and petitions. God runs a tight ship, but God is, all the same, such a gracious Captain!

The parking event set me to thinking of God's watchful and competent eye, and also of we poor souls here on earth who struggle to navigate our lives. Most all of the people that I met were pleasant and joyful folks who were glad to hear a happy greeting and a few sound words

of direction. Working the lot is a pleasant duty. Having said all that, it also becomes very noticeable that most people are a bit impatient. We want to get on our way, and this sense of urgency can make us at least partially deaf and blind to some helpful instruction. Some are a little nervous. One gentleman asked me more than once if I was going to be sure not to park him in. Some amount of confusion and uncertainty are understandable in the shuffle of such a moment. How often I doubt my loving Heavenly Father's direction and the genuineness of His care. This world is a confusing and often bewildering place.

The day also taught me a lesson in my own walk and witness to the world. In light of the potential chaos of a parking area I reminded myself to be careful how I signal and direct our guests. Signal big. Speak clearly. In our weariness it is easy to become half-hearted in our gestures and instructions to those trying their best to navigate. Let us resolve to always be clear in the signals we give. This is sound advice for directing cars, and a reminder of how we must be clear to the world about our faith, our loving God, and how they too can find the Way to Life.

What a wonderful day. Many were served well and there was room for all. And what a joyful reminder that God is in control as we navigate the big parking lot of life. May we learn to trust in God, calm down, pay attention and be glad.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

May God Almighty direct our days in his peace, and grant us the gifts of his blessing; may he deliver us in all our troubles, and establish our minds in the tranquility of his peace; may he so guide us through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal. —Gregorian Sacramentary, 6th century