



Pastor Hanke's Blog

November 11, 2018

Beware: Church vs. Charity?

Bible Reference: Mark 12:38-44

I have always been one to love an unexpected plot twist. My favorite movies have a huge revelation or twist at the end. I will never forget the first time I saw *The Village*. The ending was so powerful! This village had hidden themselves away from the rest of the world. (If I wrecked a really old movie, I apologize.) At some point, how many of us wished we were hidden away? I think it comes when our eyes are opened and we honestly realize how the truth is missing in this world. I am seldom convinced by anything the world tries to teach me anymore. It is not that I want to be the constant skeptic, but I want to learn the true reason why a certain scenario is being presented the way it is. What is the motivation? What is going on behind the scenes?

We just finished the November elections. What a wild ride! My kids made comments like, "Dad, how do you know who to vote for?" and "Dad, why do they let bad people run?" Wisdom from a 10-year-old is sometimes the best. I had no explanation for the millions of smoke screens and the constant confusion. Outside of posting for church or preschool, my Facebook posts are usually pictures of my family. However after I voted, I decided to post a picture of me in front of a Prop Z sign. I thought this was safe; I mean who doesn't love the zoo. We have the best zoo in America! But to my surprise, someone disapproved. Why would anyone have issue with this? Oh that's right—twists, smoke screens & confusion. It's no wonder why people choose not to vote. At least in politics we expect the confusion and we know to beware, but what about in other areas?

The world is constantly creating confusion for us about many things in our lives. Now the commercials are ramping up to remind us that Christmas is all about presents under the tree, and the shiny new Lexus we have been waiting for since we were kids. They tell us we need a new phone to keep up with technology, be a member at this new kind of gym, or eat certain foods to stay healthy. They question our social interactions on the Internet; do we have enough, or too many, or the wrong kind? Even with retirement, we need to have at least this much money saved or we won't survive. The confusion is never ending, and most of the time it sneaks up into areas where we least expect it.

The Bible reading this week shows many twists and turns, but with one common theme—"beware." Jesus is telling the people to beware of the leaders who walk around in white

robes thinking they are so great. He tells the leaders to beware of this attitude and behavior in themselves. I like the last twist Jesus touches on the best. He and His disciples just witnessed a widow putting 2 mites into the church offering, which He says was everything she had. How does that make you feel? Do you feel guilty about the widow giving everything and having nothing left to live on, or feel guilty that you aren't as generous as her? If so, that's not the point. Here's the crazy twist. Jesus wanted them, and us, to know that the widow gave to the church because she put her trust in Jesus, not in the church leaders. That's our final beware; we shouldn't look at the church like a charity. Charities are designed and motivated by human leaders, which will fail because we always do. But the church follows a heavenly leader—Jesus Christ. He is infallible. The widow gave everything to the church because she trusted her Lord with everything—because He had given her everything. We'll talk more about that on Sunday.

God's Peace,

Pastor Will