

The Summer *Me-n-Jesus* Trap

Summer's here! For many of us, that means vacation-time and weekend fun. We need summer's leisure to recharge our workplace batteries, and restore balance to our needs for work and rest. As we rest, however, let us remember to continue nurturing our spirits, which are always vulnerable to the *Me-n-Jesus* trap. *Me-n-Jesus* lures us away from Church in order to pursue joys of the beach, the garden, or the golf course.

Me-n-Jesus confuses and equates private devotion with public worship. They are not equal, and they are different. Yet, people say, "I don't need to go to Church while I'm on vacation. I can pray anywhere, anytime." This is classic *Me-n-Jesus* thinking.

Private devotion is important for our spiritual health; but, on its own, it is insufficient. Personal beliefs and expressions need to be lived out in community. In Church, we put aside self to join with other people, and direct our attention to God with music, praise, sacrament, corporate prayer, and hearing Scripture, publicly proclaimed. Private devotion doesn't do that, because it focuses on the self.

Another reason to avoid *Me-n-Jesus* is in Chapter 24, verses 52-53, of Luke's Gospel. Concerning Church worship, Luke writes: Jesus' earliest followers "...were continually in the Temple blessing God." As they worshipped, they experienced great joy. Not just *joy*, but *great joy*. Worship in Church brings unique and significant benefits.

Me-n-Jesus not only minimizes public worship, it deceives us about Scripture. *Me-n-Jesus* says: let's read the Bible on our own. We don't need to go to Church to hear it being read. But that sentiment is a modern conceit, which contradicts how the Bible was written and used throughout history.

Prior to the Reformation, literacy was low and there were no printing presses. Yet, Christianity spread quickly throughout the world. Scripture's stories were publicly proclaimed in language and metrical verses, which captivated people's imaginations and inspired their souls. The Bible's power to bless people comes through public proclamation, which is why it is still read in churches, today. Christians have learned that what God says through Scripture is most accurately discerned in community. After all, it is the community's story of God and God's people, living and working, together.

As we rest over the summer, refreshing ourselves to return to work, let us keep a healthy balance in our bodies, minds and spirits. Let us avoid the *Me-n-Jesus* trap. Self-centeredness, which is so prevalent in secular culture, wants to infect our sacred spaces, too. What our souls need, to be healthy, is a balance of *Jesus, us, and me*, in that order. We nurture our spiritual health as we go to Church, year round.

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