

After Shrove Tuesday's Chocolate Extravaganza, I had a request that tonight's sermon be about "Chocolate" and all I could come up with was a quote from Martin Luther: "Sin boldly, that grace may abound even more!"

Actually, I think "WHY CARE?" is the question of our day...

With all of the anger & discord, questions about Race, War, Earthquakes in Turkey & Syria, bussing Migrants from Florida to New York, Mass Shootings: Why Care? Why not just close our ears to the world, change the channel, imagine all of the problems of the world are someone else's concern? Because somewhere along the line, we encountered hardship and somebody cared for us; even if we never did, we were taught to care because GOD loved us first.

We regularly recite: God loved the world so much, God gave God's only begotten child for us.

Jesus suffered and died for us.

So, who are we, as followers of Christ?

We are Christ's Ambassadors to the world.

GOD making God's appeal, through us.

That is a pretty amazing responsibility.

My favorite television episode comes from Aaron Sorkin's THE WEST WING, as a retelling of The Good Samaritan. A Man falls into a sewer and cries out for help. A Priest is walking by, who offers him a prayer. A Doctor writes a Prescription. A Philanthropist puts a check in an envelope. When an old friend passes by and jumps into the Sewer saying "I thought you needed someone who cared and I have been here before so I know the way out."

Last week we were at a Supper Cluster, and I told the story that when I was 28, I was in my first Solo-Pastorate when someone in the church described he was the Midwest Sales Manager for JC Penney's. He described that the store had a new Policy: People could return any merchandise the store sold even without a receipt, and the store would give them the last price for the merchandise. It could be brand new, or tattered and torn rags, and they received the price for that item. HOWEVER, they had a problem. The stores had to burn all returned merchandise! Because if the store gave these returns to Good Will or another Charity, someone could buy it there and bring it back to Penney's for full refund. He asked: "Do we care? Is there something our church could do." We realized "Is a Brooks Brothers Suit still a Suit without the label? Is a Louis Vuitton purse, still a purse? Are Levi's still blue jeans without the tags?" On Saturday, The Deacons and the teenagers of the Church joined me at a warehouse, where we spent the morning cutting all of the labels off of returned clothing. Then we loaded the unmarked items into our van and delivered it to Catholic Charities. They gave us a receipt for over \$10,000 of donations. We went back monthly and by the end of the year, we were donating several \$100,000 of items each month. At which we changed the Department Store's National Policy, that they would pay employees to remove tags and the store would make the donation. Caring made a difference.

Our church had sponsored Lost boys from South Sudan. The Government requirement was that for three months we help them with donations of furniture, clothing, pots and pans, rent and food. Do you know of a church that can collect donations like that? Several months later, one came to church announcing: "I thought my parents died 25 years ago, but they are still alive!" "As a refugee, I cannot go. We need someone to go for us to find the lost and re-unite us." Six weeks later I was on a plane solo into a war zone. AND within two weeks we had found and re-united over 100 families who thought their child had died, 25 years before. Conditions were horrible. No water or electricity. It is over 120 degrees for 6 months of the year, followed by 18" of rain every day and night for six months. I literally almost died.

We set a 2nd Goal of trying to build a Clinic to provide Health care. One Sunday morning a man came to me and said I need to go to South Sudan. AND I admit, I said to him, "Chuck, I was a 45 year old man in good health and I almost died, I cannot tell your wife I am sending a 78 year old." And he said, "Craig, we are trying to provide a clinic in South Sudan. I have a Masters degree from Alfred State University, where my Thesis was on the Tensile Strength of Concrete, I am one of the few people in the world who can pour an 8" slab of concrete, on sand in the desert, and have it not crack or absorb into the ground." And he went and poured the floor, teaching people how to make and set bricks, and he never got sick.

WHY CARE? Because, if we have the ability to make a difference. As CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS OF GOD TO THE WORLD, how can we not care? The question is not WHY, but What is there that we could do because WE CARE?