

Friday, July 3, 2020

For the good of all

- Pastor Hank French

So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith (Galatians 6:10).

Right from the beginning, people of Christian faith seemed to have understood that to be Christian is to seek the wellbeing of others, whether the “other” is a fellow Christian or not. No matter what else they may have thought about Christians, non-Christians in the first few centuries were often completely amazed at the way Christians loved—not just how they loved each other, but how they loved those outside the community of faith as well. Such loving service continues today.

The Roman emperor, Julian, no friend of Christians, once criticized Roman religion by stating that: “Atheism [by which he meant Christianity] has grown through the loving service rendered even to strangers.... It is a scandal that the godless Galileans [by which he meant Christians] care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them.” Love was—and is—the mark of a Christian.

When Paul wrote “The whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:14), he was not only quoting Jesus who was quoting the Hebrew Bible, he intuitively knew that the word “neighbor” applied to everyone you came across and not just those in the family of faith. We look to the wellbeing of those within the family of faith, but we also look to the wellbeing of those who are outside the family of faith. We follow Paul’s admonition: “Let us work for the good of all.”

All around the world, at hospitals and clinics built by Christians, no one is denied treatment for not being a Christian. At food shelves run by Christians all around the world, nobody is denied food for not being a Christian. From universities to village schools built by Christians, no one is denied an education for not being a Christian. Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Disaster Response do not ask to see a baptismal certificate before providing urgently needed assistance to those in need. And because all of this is true, the world is a better place than it would be without communities of faithful people working—often behind the scenes— “for the good of all.”

Prayer: God of infinite compassion, thank you for people of faith who mirror your compassion in service to any in need. Amen.