

Smile! You're on Candid Church!

by Chuck Durham

We Sometimes say:

“It'd be funny, if it weren't so serious.”

Judah's King Jehoshaphat asked Israel's King Ahab: “Is there not still a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of him?” Ahab replied, “There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord, but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (1 Kings 22:7, 8).

What are we in this “Following the Lord” business for anyway? If God's man is blunt, straightforward, and often hurtful in the things he demands, what are we to do? Pack up our things and head for home? It'd be funny, if it wasn't so serious.

A new church forming in our area sends out an advertisement proclaiming a “non-judgmental atmosphere,” in order to attract newcomers. So what does that mean? In such a place will one ever hear the truth preached? Will someone ever hear the Word of God pressed home in its searing honesty?

If we preach the truth of the Bible, we are going to hurt people's feelings. We are going to step on toes. We are going to proclaim the fact of sin in the lives of everyone, thus the fact of guilt. And with guilt comes shame. And with shame, hopefully, the sorrow of repentance.

Truth will cause people to feel bad before truth can offer the pardon that makes them feel good. Truth sifts people. It judges right from wrong. The sad reality is that a lot of Ahabs still abide in the world: “That preacher never says anything good about me and I hate him for it.” It'd be funny, if it weren't so serious.

John A. Broadus tells the story of his being a student at the University of Virginia. Trying to convert a friend of his, he wrote him a note in Greek: *hen se hysterei* (one thing you lack). They are words of Jesus in Mark 10:21 addressed to the rich, young ruler -- a religious, moral man who was blissfully unaware of the idol he worshipped. Broadus' plea to his friend won the day. It was not said in rancor, or delivered in spite. But it was blunt. And it was true. And it winged its way to its mark, hitting the bulls' eye.

Why are we in this “following the Lord” business anyway? Are we being candid with ourselves? Can we stomach the frankness of the Word of God? It'd be funny, if it weren't so serious.

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