

# "Mothers Don't Let Your Pastors Grow Up To Be Entertainers" Jude 3

Circuit Pastors' Conference and  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Emmett, Idaho  
May 14, 1995

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

On this Mother's Day, please understand that the essence of this sermon is from a real life situation that has taken place in one of our sister congregations. The congregation is not in our Treasure Valley area, nor even in Idaho for that matter. The name of the congregation is not important for you to know. The writer of the letter is a real individual, though the letter was never really written. The event described is real. Narration and details have been included to the essential truth of this account in order to prepare it for use as a sermon this morning. In addition, names, details, and locations have been changed to protect the dying and to keep from unnecessarily exposing the guilty. The sermon is based upon the 3rd verse of Jude. Please listen to that verse as we consider it under the admonition ...

*... Mothers, Don't Let Your Pastors Grow Up To Be Entertainers.*

*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Dear Pastor, Bandleader & Anyone I May Have Offended,

Actually, I'm not sure to whom I should be addressing this letter. On that day, more than four months ago now, there were probably many others nearby who heard my outburst. There may have been other members of the congregation within shouting distance who heard me as well. So maybe I should be directing this letter of apology to you and the entire congregation. I have no objection should you deem it necessary or worthwhile to share it with the Church.

All of this is very difficult for me. As you are aware, I am not someone who is out in the front or a leader in the congregation. I am a private person, and even more so since my husband died almost a decade ago. Anyway, I want to apologize for my shouting at you in ungodly anger; to confess that it was a sinful thing for me to do; and to be reassured of my forgiveness through Jesus. While I don't want to justify my sin, perhaps it would be helpful for you to know some of the background details.

To begin with, you might be wondering why I am writing this to you instead of appearing before you -- you know, speaking of these matters with my mouth and verbally confessing my sin. The truth is that I am no longer able to speak since my cancer of the throat has resulted in a surgery where my

thyroid cartilage, epiglottis, and vocal cords have been removed. It's called a complete laryngectomy. Therefore, pastor, *I found it necessary to write to you.*

[Of course, you never knew about my cancer and that's because, as I said, I am a very private person and did not discuss my situation with anyone except my doctor and a couple close friends who are also members of our Church. So please do not feel guilty for not visiting me. You didn't know about this. Even writing this letter and sharing this about me goes against my nature. The thought that you might share it with the congregation is frightening to me, but please do it if you think it necessary and helpful.]

So, why did I become so angry and yell at you that Sunday four months ago? Well, to answer that question, we must go back about eight years. I think it was a time several years, maybe three or four years before you came here to be the pastor. Anyway, the congregation was stagnant in its growth -- not many new members were coming in; the old families that founded the congregation were dying out; their children and grandchildren were moving away or falling away from our congregation. Though I hate to admit it, my son and daughter were among those no longer attending.

Anyway, many here were afraid that the congregation would become old and die out. Examples were shared of other churches having to close. That scared people and they asked what could be done to keep it from happening here. The answer was to have more young families and youth and children coming to church. A questionnaire was sent out to everyone and the responses came back in two general areas and with many suggestions concerning the direction of the congregation.

One group wanted to remain with the traditional, liturgical services we had and to do greater, personal evangelism and teaching work in our community. They, ... and I really should say, we ... we wanted to gather as the Church has done for thousands of years - assembling in His Name, confessing both sin and creed, singing the historic liturgies of the church, hearing a sermon that convicts us with the Law and feeds us with the sweetness of the Gospel. We believed that the Church needed to continue the confessional communion with angels and archangels and the entire company of heaven. We believed that the Church needed and wanted to hear that ancient blessing which Christ's undershepherds announced over the people before we leave the holy place. All that, and more, we simply wanted to share with those who were visiting us and those who were interested in being members of the congregation.

The other group felt that the liturgical services were keeping people away and holding back the church. New services needed to be developed which would be interesting and entertaining enough to draw new people into our congregation. They felt that barriers to worship had to be removed and that included anything that was negative. For example, the confession of sin needed to be toned down because people did not like to say, *I a poor, miserable sinner*. The preaching of the convicting Law, which condemns everyone to an eternity of hell, was not thought to be a loving thing. The cry was to avoid the Law and immerse the people in the Gospel. The Scriptural practice of close communion was felt to be too negative if the congregation was going to grow. So, they called for us to abandon such practices.

Needless to say, the congregation was divided. Rather heated discussions followed -- between individuals, in groups, and at church meetings. The pastor became indecisive and wavered slightly, allowing this great can of worms to be opened. Personalities took over and the pastor, in an attempt to remain neutral tried to appease both sides. So, a decision was made to have two services. A

solution was sought and put into practice -- to have the early service be the traditional, liturgical service and the late service be the entertaining, contemporary one. Our church then had two different congregations here. In an attempt to be fair and open-minded, I attended both services. Within a year the pastor left, taking a Call extended to him from another congregation.

Almost a year later, you arrived, accepting the Call to come here. With a sincere heart, you wanted to help everyone. You wanted the Church to continue to grow and you worked hard at doing so. But the seeds of sociology and the mind-set of our culture's cry for tolerance had been planted among us. *Growth* became the rallying call to work. Everything was done with *church growth* in mind. The Law and Gospel Ministry of Word and Sacrament was down-played and took 2nd place to *growth at all costs*.

At first, it didn't seem to work in the contemporary, entertaining service. But when the organ was no longer used to accompany the hymns and a band was hired to perform, the numbers began to increase. Instead of a congregation, there was an audience. Your sermons went from 25 minutes of Law-Gospel preaching on the Scriptures to 10 minutes of interesting illustrations with a few Bible passages thrown in, and the people said *amen*. That was when I stopped attending the contemporary service. The music degraded from singing of the historic hymns of the church, to a continuous diet of Law singing and camp tunes. No longer in the contemporary service could one sing, *Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His Blood for me*. Now the songs became *I have decided to follow Jesus*, and *He's a peach of a Savior, that's why I'm bananas for Him*.

It is no wonder that a second contemporary service had to be added a year ago. Pastor, people are like children. When children don't know any better and have been taught it doesn't matter, they would rather have a steady diet of ice cream, candies, and cake. And when they are not taught the importance of nutritious eating, they don't opt for meals of vegetables, fruits, and meat. And if that is true concerning the physical food we put into our stomachs and the stomachs of our children, how much more important is the spiritual food that is fed to our souls and the souls of our children and youth? Therefore, dear pastor, *I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*.

Over the years, the liturgical service has grown smaller in numbers and older in members. The singing of the *Venite* and the *Te Deum Laudamus* are not spectacular in tone and volume, but the words come from repentant and joyful hearts. Since my surgery, that is the only way I am able to sing any more. In fact, I wonder if anyone in the contemporary services even knows about that praise hymn called the *Te Deum Laudamus*? Sometimes I get the impression that you and the rest of the congregation are simply putting up with those of us who want the traditional service. I don't know, maybe I am being paranoid and such thoughts are sinful. In Jesus' Name please forgive me if they are.

I seem to be rambling on in this letter. It's 2:30 in the morning and I can't sleep because I am very much afraid. I fear for you, pastor. You have been called to feed the sheep, not to entertain the goats, and, ..... But really, it does not behoove me to counsel an undershepherd of the Lord. And yet, pastor, if you will receive the counsel from God, it is found in the comforting words of Luke 22:31-32. I fear for you and pray for you. I say no more on this, but refer you to those two verses and ask that you receive them from the Lord. If you do, a blessing will come to you and to all the people.

Because I fear for you, I also fear for the congregation -- and not the congregation as if it were some wooden statue -- THE CONGREGATION. Rather, the congregation is made up of children, youth, women, and men. Some of us are sick and hurting. Others of us are proud and arrogant. All of us are in need of the Lord. Some are grieving, others are spiteful, but all are in need of the Word of the Lord.

The liturgy of the church is a protection for you, pastor, and for the congregation. The historic liturgies reflect the teaching of salvation alone by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. In the times before the Reformation, false pastors arose and preached a different gospel from the pulpits. But the church during those centuries was sustained by the unchanging liturgy of the church. Yet, what will sustain the church in our day if, while the preaching of the Word is cast aside, the liturgy is so offensive that we discard it?

So, along that same line of thought, I fear for the children and grandchildren who have fallen away from the Lord and His Church. If God, in His great mercy, leads them to repent of their unbelief and return to His church here, what will they be coming back to? When our nation falls due to its own corruption and decay, and people return to the Lord and His church, what will they find? Will they stop here, open their hymnals and join the one, holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church in singing *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, or will they find a group of people assembled to hear a bandleader leading the audience in the singing of *Drop-Kick Me, Jesus, Through the Goal Posts of Life*?

When my children and grandchildren repent of their unbelief and come back, and I pray that they will, I want them to hear that Jesus shed His Blood on the cross for all of their sins, that He rose again from the tomb on Easter morning, that He ascended on high and now reigns triumphantly and that He intercedes for all of us before the Father. I want them to know that the Gospel is not simply a teaching about forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation -- it IS forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation.

Dear pastor, it was anger and fear that caused me to yell at you that Sunday over four months ago. On that day, while you were talking with the contemporary service's Bandleader, I was waiting to speak with you. So, when you told him that you were going on vacation and asked him to take over the leading of the traditional service on the following Sunday, I knew that it would be like the other times he led the service when you were gone - camp songs and stories. I just came unglued and I yelled at you.

Now at 4:00am, as I am writing this letter to you, there is no anger, only a great deal of fear. You see, my surgery was not successful in stopping the cancer. I am dying. Pastor, I have never died before and I am afraid. Having sat in Church and Bible classes since I was a little girl, I have heard the truth of God's love for me. I know that my Redeemer lives, and still there are times, usually at night, when I wake up and am afraid. I contend FOR the Gospel and AGAINST my doubts. I know that Jesus is with me, but I am also very much afraid. I find it to be quite true that I am not *contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness.*

Pastor, only the Word of God will sustain me and I have it open and on the table before me right now. This Sunday I want to be able to come to Church, confess my sins with a voiceless mouth, and hear the Word of God's forgiveness which will carry me into the Lord's nail-pierced hands. Will I be able to do that this Sunday? Perhaps I have written too much in this letter, but *Beloved pastor, while I*

*was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

Sincerely In Jesus' Name,

Hilda

*Beloved people, while I was very diligent to speak to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to speak to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. To all of you, but especially to you Christian mothers whose day this is, please ...*

*... Don't Let Your Pastors Grow Up To Be Entertainers.*