THE HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES

LUKE 14:23

The governor of the wedding feast instructed his servants to go out into the highways and hedges and compel people to come to the wedding feast. Those who had received formal invitations had made excuses and had not come so he sent his servants where they would find people and invited them to be his guests at the wedding. As missionaries that is what we do. Our mission team has been doing that in Baltimore. We too are products of missionary efforts from years gone by.

I have a little booklet that I picked up in the Smokies on Churches of The Smokies. Charles Maynard is the author. In this booklet there is a short paragraph that speaks of The Reverend Doctor Robert Thomas. There is picture of him sitting on his horse. He ministered and preached among the mountain people from 1927 into the 1960’s. Reverend Thomas was an ordained Methodist minister as well as a medical doctor. He established a school, a hospital, and five preaching stations. The primary focus of his ministry was Sevier County Tennessee. Here was a man that found people and ministered to them. He was concerned with ministering to the whole person. He ministered to the mind by building a school; he ministered to the body by building a hospital; and he ministered to the soul by establishing preaching stations.

Some years ago, Kathie and I visited a church an hour or so away from Orlando, Florida. It was a large Church with a large campus. On the property was a school, something like an after-hours urgent care with volunteer doctors and nurses, a food pantry and clothing center as well as the worship center. Their goal as a church was to reach and minister to the people of their community. They wanted to minister to the whole person.

In 2000, some of us from Pleasant View and others went to the Crimea in Ukraine. The village where we were stationed had one church. It had been built by missionaries from the United States. Its primary function was to minister the gospel to the masses that were lost but it also served as a medical station for the sick. They had people who tried to minister to the great number of alcoholics in the area.

As a church our function is often diverse. We should never lose sight of the fact that our goal is to spread the gospel of Christ. Sometimes we must feed them so they can hear over their growling stomachs; other times we may need to heal them so they realize we care; and there are times when they may be primed and ready and all we need to do is preach the gospel and lead them to Jesus.

Yours in Christ,

Brother Randy Burtram