

Stupid Christians



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Medical Management Ingenuity

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by Ken Hekman ~ December 2001

When you hear the expression “stupid Christians” twice in a week, it gets your attention.

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The word “stupid” conjures unkind images of ignorance, foolishness, vulnerability and more.

Righteousness has a pretty high price tag, like freedom and love.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”

Matthew 5:10

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The contexts were different, but the messages were unmistakable. In the first case, Dr. Augustin Batis was describing how the community would view the Dr. Luca Medical Clinic if it were to fail to meet some pretty high expectations. The label would have been an indictment of sorts – self-evident proof that companies insisting on moral dealings can’t survive in the real world, the world of looking out for number one. It would resound as a grand I-told-you-so with those who acknowledge no bravado except their own.

The second reference came as a frequently expressed opinion about two brave gynecologists who refuse to do abortions in Cluj-Napoca, a region of over 700,000 people. Not only do they go against the flow, but they do so even though it means banishment from providing deliveries in all the local hospitals and being ostracized by all their professional colleagues. Every other gynecologist in the area hates them, because these two “stupid Christians” are foregoing a pretty good revenue stream. After all, in a culture **where three out of four pregnancies end in abortion**, who can afford not to be in the money? But perhaps even the greater irony is that neither of these doctors is a Christian. They simply are willing to work for a Christian anti-abortion ministry (Clinica Pro Vita led by Dr. David Ilie) because they are personally convicted that abortion is wrong.

Nobody wants to be thought of as stupid. It conjures unkind images of ignorance, foolishness, vulnerability and more. The mere mention of the word causes some to recall painful memories of childhood brutality. “Stupid is as stupid does,” Forrest Gump said repeatedly in a feeble defense of his limited intelligence. We may have felt sorry for his congenital condition, but we’re less sympathetic for those who knowingly act in ways that seem to be self-defeating.

But in Romania where evangelical Christians are a miniscule minority, the majority opinion of them may be just as unkind. After all, those stupid Christians would rather waste time and money defending their righteousness than simply greasing the palms of those in power, like everyone else does. And money is scarce here as it is. Who has any to waste? Don’t they realize that this is just a part of doing business in a struggling economy? It’s a matter of survival. It’s what you have to do to get what you want.

Righteousness has a pretty high price tag, like freedom and love. September 11 showed the world, once and for all, that freedom is not free. And grief is the timeless price we pay for love. Doing the right thing never goes on sale. It carries hidden costs that can’t be measured when you commit to it. How do you measure loneliness and humiliation? How do you make a value decision between a timely bribe that assures a desired outcome, compared with hopeless delays and no promise of results? Committing to righteousness is like a marriage – for better or for worse. And you can count on a good dose of the “worse,” even if you can’t define it in advance.

**Our eyes are on a different prize:
“Blessed are those who are called *stupid Christians*, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven”.**

But the Beatitudes offer a lot of wisdom about how we are to conduct ourselves in Romania and other developing countries – and even in the U.S. We may be thought of as “stupid Christians,” but our eyes are on a different prize than the accolades of our local peers. Matthew 5:10 could just as easily read this way: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, *those who are called stupid Christians*, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”