

Community Church of Issaquah  
September 7, 2025  
The Church: Hospital for the Sick  
Rev. Vincent Lachina

Let me ask a simple question as we begin this morning. Are there any old sayings that have stuck with you most of your life? Let me give you an example. “Sticks and stone may break my bones but words can never harm me.” Did you ever say that growing up, or maybe some adult said that? How about “Dot your I’s and cross our t’s.” “That ship already sailed.” Now, it’s your turn to share something that has stuck with you for most of your life. Who’s first?

Since I don’t think any of you attended seminary, it’s doubtful many of the quotes I had to listen to from professors who were seeking to be profound and thought of as brilliant. Three years of seminary and sadly, I recall only a few of the so-called life changing statements that my seminary professors dropped on our heads. But one very wise statement that has been engraved in my heart and in my mind has been the groundwork for my own ministry for all the years since I heard it stated in one of my New Testament classes. This is that message: “The church is not a show place for the saints but a hospital for the sick.”

You can rest assured that this statement generated much discussion both in the class and out of it. To be honest, I didn’t agree with the professor at first. It seemed to me

that the church should be a place where godly and saintly people were seen and recognized. My initial question was to ask, "What do you mean by the word "sick?" And why would a church serve as a hospital? Is a pastor supposed to be a doctor as well?" I had to ponder that for quite a while until it began to make sense to me. The very word of a church building is usually called a sanctuary, meaning a place of hiding or safety.

I am fully aware that when we use church talk, the word hospital would mean a place where Christ, the Great Physician, worked. And the sick are those people who have never accepted Christ as personal Savior or maybe they have never had a transfusion of the cleansing blood of Jesus. That's church talk. We, the chosen of God, have work to do to seek those who are not saved and help them find Christ. But that is only part of the work of the church. We have work to do among our own church faith family. You, me, everyone here need healing from time to time.

In truth, this church and every church is called for that very purpose, to be a sanctuary for safety or a hospital for healing. There is a strong clarification that I need to make sure you understand here. When we talk about the sick, we are not talking only about the stranger who comes to our door and needs help. It's much deeper than that. Each of us at some time in our seeking safety and healing are truly identifiable as "sick" and need help. Under all that confusion of church and hospital and more is the harsh reality that we, too, have been sick at some point in our life.

Yet, we come into our church or sanctuary seeking more likely to be in the showplace where we can convey to others how our lives appear to be perfect. But they're not. Mine isn't and yours isn't either. In my searching for Christian hymns on You Tube, I came across s hymn by a young man named Matthew West. To say that it was eye opening and impactful for me would be an understatement. It has the message in music of that simple truth about a church being a hospital for the sick. I realized that he was singing a hymn that described my life from time to time. Let me share some of the words for you as they are posted on the screen. It's a hymn called "Truth Be Told."

*Lie number one you're supposed to have it all together  
And when they ask how you're doing  
Just smile and tell them, "Never better"*

*Lie number 2 everybody's life is perfect except yours  
So keep your messes and your wounds  
And your secrets safe with you behind closed doors*

*Truth be told  
The truth is rarely told, now  
I say I'm fine, yeah I'm fine oh I'm fine, hey I'm fine but  
I'm not  
I'm broken*

*And when it's out of control I say it's under control  
but it's not  
And you know it  
I don't know why it's so hard to admit it  
When being honest is the only way to fix it*

*There's no failure, no fall  
There's no sin you don't already know  
So let the truth be told*

*There's a sign on the door, says, "Come as you are" but  
I doubt it  
'Cause if we lived like it was true, every Sunday  
morning pew would be crowded  
But didn't you say the church should look more like a  
hospital  
A safe place for the sick, the sinner and the scarred and  
the prodigals  
Like me*

*Can I really stand here unashamed  
Knowin' that your love for me won't change?  
Oh God if that's really true  
Then let the truth be told*

*Truth be told  
The truth is rarely told, now  
I say I'm fine, yeah I'm fine oh I'm fine, hey I'm fine but  
I'm not  
I'm broken*

None of us likes to respond honestly when someone asks, "How are you?" Knowing that opening up with honesty and telling someone what's going on in life, we tend to simply say "I'm fine." I do that and I'm guessing you will do that as well. But if we are to look more deeply into the message Paul preached to the church in Philippi, we would perhaps

see that each of us is a hospital worker or a patient in need of healing. Did you hear these words as they were read?

*Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being likeminded, having the same love, being one in the spirit and of one mind.*

Yes, there are those outside our congregation who might have some very serious problems – spiritually, emotionally, physically, financially, socially. It's easy to identify those as being the sick in need of a hospital. But we need to pay more attention to those within our church faith family who might be in need of attention and care for healing. Even if they might say, "I'm fine," and we brush that aside and move on to enjoying our showplace, there is hurt and suffering there that needs the compassionate care we can give. Don't assume that when someone says they are fine that they are saying everything in their life is perfect. It isn't. Are you ready to help?

There's another saying that perhaps we need to give some attention to today as we talk about our hospital for the sick. Did you ever hear anyone say, "Silence is golden?" I'd like to take a minute or two to dispel that incorrect statement. Yes, sometimes it is wise to remain silent in some circumstances. I know that first-hand. When I am in a gathering of my siblings, trust me, I know that keeping silent at times is the wisest move I can ever make. I think you get the picture. Button up, bite your tongue and just smile. That silence is golden, but there's more to learn.

Today we are talking about healing the sick here at our sanctuary and in our congregation. We must be aware that silence is at times very painful. Imagine when someone shares a health concern and we quickly say, "You have my prayers." That's commendable, but it might not address that person's need. If there is but silence that follows that one quick thought, it can be and is very hurtful sometimes. That silence is not golden. What if you feel as if you've made a friend who will be with you forever, and yet months or even years go by with dead silence from the other end of that friendship. That silence isn't golden, either. It hurts the heart.

As I was trying to compose something meaningful and caring for our church, it came to me that much too often we do not realize that our silence can be and is hurtful for those who seek someone who will be present for them, and not be silent. As we move forward with the powerful message that Doug preached on Mustard Seed as our mission and ministry, we must give our attention to these two truths that should guide us just as Paul told the church in Philippi, *"in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to our own interests but each of you to the interests of others."*

If we are to remain a caring and loving faith family, each of us must give some serious thought to the needs of those who are here with us. Can we commit to listen and seek to assist in healing? Can we commit to breaking the silence that some of our members live with daily until they are with us here? This church is indeed a hospital for the sick or wounded or lonely. Here in our church there is a need

to break the silence and be a voice and the ears for those who would love to be outside the silence.

If you don't take anything I've said today home with you, remember these two things: "The Church Is not a showplace for saints, but a hospital for the sick," and "not all silence is golden, sometimes it hurts." I'll leave you with some wise words from my mother about being there for others. She often said, "Two ears, no waiting." Let's practice that and see what an impact it has on us all.