

**Kelly A. Fryer. Reclaiming the L Word: Renewing the Church  
from Its Lutheran Core.  
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**Chapter 7. The World Needs What We Have**

***SILENCE IS NOT AN OPTION***

As Jesus rode toward Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, he was smiling at the crowds waiting for him – children waving palm branches, young women dancing, and old men singing songs. He could hear them shouting, “Blessed are you who comes in the name of the Lord!” When the Pharisees started complaining, Jesus must have looked at them like they were crazy. “What do you *mean* they should be *silent*? How COULD they be?! *God* put these people here! If they weren’t shouting my name, God would make these ROCKS start singing. Guys,” Jesus said, “this is a *God* thing. **Silence is not an option.**”

After all these years, silence is *still* not an option. Jesus said, “You shall be my witnesses. Your job is to tell people about me. Your job is to feed my sheep; care for those in need; heal the sick; and share with everyone the joy that comes from following me. Your job is to be my hands and feet, to be the salt that *changes* the way everything tastes, to be a light shining in the darkness of this world. As my Father has sent me, so I send you.”

What a crazy world we live in! But just standing there and doing nothing, when the world around you is crying out for help, is NOT an option.

***THE FREEDOM WE SHARE***

Martin Luther once said that when you have had an encounter with the God who comes down to set us free, you just can’t stay silent. That’s what Peter and John said, too, in those early days written about in Acts: “We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

It’s like some kind of switch gets flipped in your heart when Jesus’ love sets you free. It changes you. All of a sudden, you understand WHY you have been given the gifts that you have. These gifts are not for you at all. Luther said, “Your faith is truly active through love, finding expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done.”

In his pamphlet called *Christian Liberty*, Luther described what happens in the lives of Christians: Jesus meets us and, all of a sudden, it’s NOT about US anymore. It’s all about what we can do to make a difference in our neighbor’s lives. “**I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me.** I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ.”

## ***THE STRANGEST IDEA OF ALL***

Maybe the hardest thing for us Christians to get our heads around these days is the idea that our church does not exist to meet our needs. We talk about “my” church, as though the church were really ours, instead of God’s. But God never intended for it to be this way. **The church may be the only organization on the planet that exists entirely for the sake of those who don’t belong to it yet.**

## ***THIS IS THE NOISE WE MAKE***

The Bible says that we are the “body of Christ.” This means that we are the flesh and blood *thing* that Jesus is using to get stuff done. We use our bodies to pick things up and move them from one place to another. We use our bodies to GO places and SAY things. We use our bodies to hug those who are sad, and poke those who are lazy, and vigorously shake hands with those who have done a really good job. We use our bodies to ACT. We are the people through whom Jesus wants to be at work in the world.

Most of us think that we will be happier if we keep everything we have all to ourselves. We are afraid of giving our stuff – or ourselves—away. We’re wrong. We have been set free so that we can share that freedom with others. **All around us people are hungry and thirsty for the God we know in Jesus, the God who always comes down. Nothing we ever do will make more sense or feel more right or give us more joy than sharing that God with them.**

This is the NOISE we make. It is a joyful, generous, hopeful noise. And it is loud enough for our whole crazy world to hear.

## ***WRESTLING WITH THE WORD      //      THINKING THINGS THROUGH***

### **1. Read Acts 5: 17-29.**

What gave these people courage and hope? What gives you hope in this crazy world?

### **2. Read John 21: 15-19.**

Peter denied Jesus, but he comes to learn what it means to be embraced by the love and forgiveness of Jesus. What does Jesus say that Peter needs to do? What does this mean for you -- and for our church?

3. Have you ever needed to hear a good word from someone and they let you down? Have you ever let an opportunity to share the good news with somebody else slip away?

4. If our church is really set free to be a church FOR others, what do we need to be set free FROM?

5. Who are the “others” in your community, the ones Jesus wants to use you – and our church – to reach? What dreams do you think God has for our church? Think big!!