

Time after Pentecost
The Reverend John H. Brock

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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1
Philemon 1-21; Luke 14:25-33

I was flipping channels the other night, looking for something to watch, and stumbled upon a biography on the "E!" channel. It was a biography about Jenna Jameson. If you don't know who Jenna Jameson is, that's not a bad thing, and I'll tell you in just a moment. If you DO know who Jenna Jameson is, first of all, give **me** a minute to explain why I watched the biography, and, to let you know that **I do** offer private confession.

Because, Jenna Jameson, is a star, producer, director, model, author, and CEO in, to put this politely, what is euphemistically called the *Adult Entertainment Industry*. Her movies, in which she either stars, produces, or directs (sometimes all three) are some of the top grossing films in that industry. Her book "How To Make Love Like a Porn Star: A Cautionary Tale" spent six weeks on the *New York Times* best sellers list (it's amazing how much one can learn watching these biographies). She has been involved in that "industry" ever since she used a fake i.d. to get a job dancing at a "gentleman's club" at actual age of 17. And for nearly half her life now has been selling sex. (Okay, I know, you're thinking two things: WHY was I watching, and; WHY am I talking about a porn star. Let me say, it was kind of like the proverbial road accident – too gruesome to watch, but I couldn't look away)

The program did, probably, a fairly good job of interviewing Jameson herself, along with her father, brother, former husband, and various people involved who both love and support her, and those who criticize what she does. The show talked about Jenna's youth: the death of her mother at age two; her early drug addictions; the relationships that helped her overcome those addictions; and how she has many times helped fellow actors overcome their own drug addictions, or get a start in the industry themselves.

Of course, there were also those interviewed who did NOT approve of the Adult Entertainment Industry in general, and Jameson herself in particular. They interviewed a couple of women who against that industry in general, including a doctor who studies pornography, and of course, the requisite fundamentalist Christian male pastor.

Now, the reason I'm talking about Jameson is, though, how they closed the program. The interviewers asked many of the people with whom they had spoken throughout the program whether they thought Jenna would "go to heaven or hell". And you can pretty much guess who said what - those who were family & friends all talked about what a good person Jenna is, how she has helped them, and how she cares for those around her. Those who do not sanction the industry, at least, were not as judgmental, but once again asserted their disapproval of pornography in general. And, of course, the "fundamentalist Christian pastor" said "Jenna Jameson is evil."

In our lesson from Hebrews, we get a wonderful reminder on how to live:

Continue to love each other with true Christian love. ² Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! ³ Don't forget about those in prison. Suffer with them as though you were there yourself. Share the sorrow of those being mistreated, as though you feel their pain in your own bodies. ⁴ Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery. ⁵ Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never forsake you." ⁶ That is why we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" ⁷ Remember your leaders who first taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and trust the Lord as they do. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. . . .¹⁵ With Jesus' help, let us continually offer our sacrifice of praise to God by proclaiming the glory of his name. ¹⁶ Don't forget to do good and to share what you have with those in need, for such sacrifices are very pleasing to God. (NLT)

Let's examine these. "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." This is a direct reference to that encounter that Abraham had back in Genesis 18, when three "men" just show up at his tent. Turns out, these "men" are in reality, angels. They remind Abraham, who has once again been in a doubting mood, that the LGA is going to make good on the promise of heirs thru Sarah.

But this is also talking about hospitality in general. We need to remember that this is written in the First Century AD, that there are no real hotels or restaurants or any other modern convenience travelers take for granted, so travelers needed to either write ahead and set up some place to stay, or to rely upon the hospitality of strangers. We don't necessarily need to be offering our spare bedrooms to strangers, but we can be hospitable to our co-workers. We can be polite, even when we don't want to be, to the clerk who is dealing with a long line of customers. We can be gracious, while still driving safely, to the vehicles around us (which is the one I struggle the most with).

"Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them;" Here I must say Trinity has a thriving prison ministry. We have folks who go on a regular and frequent basis to Dauphin county prison and conduct a service of worship. This has been going on for some time, and will continue to go on as long as those folks remain committed. Thing is, a 21st century understanding of this passage would be more along the lines of: Remember those believers who are being persecuted for their faith and that wouldn't be those folks who endure jeers or taunts because they put a "fish" bumper sticker on their car, but rather those folk who are imprisoned simply because they are Christian. Or those folk who live in countries for whom worshiping is illegal Remember *those* folk, as if YOU were enduring their suffering.

"Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; Again, another one that is pretty self explanatory(altho, with my opening example, perhaps a bit more pertinent than others). But in other words, if you're married, work at staying married. One thing that I try

to tell all the couples for whom I preside at their weddings is that STAYING married takes work, from both partners. It won't just "happen"; like any relationship, like any Friendship, you have to WORK at it to help it grow, and thrive, and continue.

"Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have." Be content with what you've got. Don't lust after money. It's another way of saying, be generous, manage the things you have been given, and use them for the glory of God to promote your faith. Because what I have and how I use it all witness to what I believe. Do I believe in a giving, loving God? Or do I believe in money and "stuff"? What kind of witness do I give if I go buy a 50" flat panel plasma television? I *want* one, but do I really *need* one?

"Remember your leaders ." The writer is talking about the spiritual leaders, but I think we can include political leaders and even our employers, too. Remember your spiritual leaders, keep them in your prayers, make certain they are healthy - physically and mentally. I specifically remembered Pastor Hardy in the announcements, and well be remembering him in the prayers of the church shortly. He's been back in the office now - he presided at the wedding this afternoon. Even tho he sat as much as possible, and I presided over communion, by 2:30 (for the 1:30 wedding), he was pretty much wiped out and ready for a nap. It's going to take him awhile to regain his strength. So just because he's back in the office, don't forget him in your prayers.

So is Jenna Jameson going to heaven, or to hell? She's helped out a lot of people. They've overcome drug addiction, become established in well paying jobs. But her means of living promotes a lifestyle that is more experiential than spirit-filled, more sensual than salvific. And while the author of Hebrews would agree that our actions do not save us, IF we believe, THEN we are called to live a faith-filled lifestyle. So what about Jenna? It's not my call. It's not her call. It's not even the call of that fundamentalist pastor.

Our lesson tonight gives us some good outlines as to how to live. We need to remember, tho, that regardless of how we live and what we do, that will not earn us the love of God Besides, which is more cause for rejoicing: Someone who claims to be a believer, but continues to mess up and makes mistakes his whole life?; Or someone who doesn't really live a witness to God their whole life, but then comes to an understanding of God's grace, and compassion, and mercy, and love? Personally, I think there will be far more rejoicing over the second than the first. Even tho I fit into the first. But that's ok. The author of Hebrews reminds us how to live a witness life. Let's go and, together, live it.

Amen.