
A Radio Show Broadcast Misinformation

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
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On Monday morning, I had worked at home, answered e-mails, done my Lenten exercises, and sent in my Sunday sermon so it could be posted on the website. Then, what a stunning surprise it was to get into my car and hear a local radio broadcaster go into a rant against the Cathedral of St. Philip.

I did not hear all the comments of the person who had telephoned this talk show host. Apparently, however, she was claiming that the priest at the Cathedral of St. Philip had preached a sermon about taxing the wealthy. From what I could determine, it was the phrase "taxing the wealthy" that sent the talk show guy into a fervor. He stated to a national radio audience that the priest at the Cathedral had no idea what he was talking about, and he dismissed the Cathedral of St. Philip as a liberal place anyway.

Well, I was the preacher at the Cathedral on Sunday morning, February 10, and I said nothing at all about taxing the wealthy (I do acknowledge that I preached about the temptation of wealth!) I hope many of you reading this article were there. I hope all of you go online and read the sermon, or pick up a copy of the sermon in the Cathedral itself. We try to publish every sermon that the Cathedral clergy preach.

The radio show broadcast this misinformation, and then let the host go on to disparage a Christian Church. Apparently, the caller had been told earlier not to mention the name of the church in question. I could hear the host convince the caller to say the name. She did, and the show did not edit it; they broadcast the misinformation.

Of course, it may not be wrong to claim that the preacher did not know what he was talking about. I know that is sometimes true, especially in my case. There are plenty of things I do not know about, and I am sure those things get into my sermons.

It is also not wrong to make an opinionated claim about a person as "conservative" or "liberal." I have been called both those labels, and I know I am fair game in these politically pitched times. However, most of the times I have been called "liberal" were during discussions on social issues-like homosexuality, maybe. (When I visited the web site of the talk show host, I noted that these social issues are the very issues he does not allow anyone to talk about!) On other issues, such as whether I believe in capitalism, I am often on the "conservative" side.

However, it is wrong to broadcast misinformation. The Cathedral of St. Philip, and Christianity itself, are always bigger than political labels and political parties. Christianity is bigger than the Democratic party; Christianity is bigger than the Republican party. We have many, many members who are quite active in both those parties, and I am glad they are. Thus, the Cathedral is both "conservative" and "liberal." But if our Christian faith is not bigger than political parties, then our faith is too weak.

I worry about partisan claims being made about our churches during every election cycle. Political energy can become polarizing when our country is in the process of electing. We begin to think in terms of winning and losing, us against them, conservative and liberal. Don't let those contests control your broader Christian life. And, whatever you do, do not

lie. Once you have broadcast a lie, there is no way to retrieve it fully; lies do real damage in our world.

I actually thought my Cathedral sermon worked pretty well on Sunday. It was the First Sunday of Lent, and I preached about sin. I hope the people who talk about it are also willing to read it. Oddly enough, earlier on Sunday, I also preached on a radio program that airs on WSB-AM. I preached about sin there, too. It's Lent. Sin abounds in all of us, but grace abounds all the more (Romans 5:20).

Sam Candler signature



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