

Sunday, September 15, 2019 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 15:1-10 1 Timothy 1:12-17

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in thy site, oh Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen

We have all heard the phrase: “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk”. Drinking and driving is bad...and deadly. As a society, we have had just about enough of this silliness. We all know alcohol and driving do not match. We all know someone, either personally or through an acquaintance, that has been injured or died because of the act of drinking and driving. Sometimes the appeal to the person that is doing the crime is fruitless. So what do we do? We go after friends. We appeal to friends to please...don’t let your friend, your family member, your co-worker, your whomever, drive drunk. They could hurt themselves, or worse, hurt someone else. And if you could have stopped it, that makes you a part of this sad story. Maybe not legally, but morally...or worse...emotionally. As you will have to live with the consequences. Not pretty.

The ad council and the US department of transportation started the campaign of “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk” back in 1983. Since that time, a survey shows 68% of Americans report they have tried to prevent someone from driving after drinking since the campaign started. 68 percent. Not a bad statistic really. Shows that people understand the importance of this issue.

If drinking and driving can cause this type of reaction and response from today’s society, why are we, as Christ’s followers, missing the boat when it comes to Jesus Christ and his message. One of his messages is death. We all know that we are going to pass on at some point. From the second we take our first breath in this

life; we are also facing death at some point. We can face death alone or we face it with the Lord by our side. As Christians, we understand the importance of having our Lord and Saviors with us when we pass. Together, we pass over to a better life with him...life eternal. As Christians, this slogan used by the ad council to implore each of us to watch over our friends, should be used equally to beg them to welcome Jesus Christ into their lives. For "Friends don't let friends die unsaved". Friends don't let friends die without the Lord. Friends don't let friends die as unforgiven sinners. Friends don't let friends die lost. Friends don't let friends die without understanding the Word of God. Take your pick or add others. As Christians, we understand the love of God. We understand the importance of God's love and the lessons of Jesus Christ. He is a part of our life and love. Don't we want the same for our friends and family?

Today's Gospel of Luke 15:1-10, Jesus teaches us that each and every person is important to him. Each sinner can become a believer and change his or her way to be with Him. Each soul is important to Him. During His time on earth, he tried to influence every soul, no matter what their profession, their social status or their belief at the time. Each person is important, just as each sheep is important to a shepherd or each coin to its owner. He rejoiced when one became a believer and a part of Him. For he states: "I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents".

As faithful followers, we care about people. When we hear that someone has died, we ask ourselves: did they know the Lord? Did they have a personal relationship with the Lord? It makes us feel better if we know they passed knowing the Lord because we know they are with him now. At least I feel that

way. We lost Elaine Miller last week and Jeff several weeks ago and Ann Callnan this week, a young 59-year-old that has been a part of this community for most of those years. It is sad to see them go, but knowing they had a relationship with Jesus, that they were believers of Christ and our Father, makes it a little easier to bare. We know they are in His loving arms and we will see them again. And we know that Jesus Christ is pleased that they found their way to Him while they were here on earth. As apostles of Christ, it is our job, our responsibility, so help all souls see the light of Christ. That is what is pleasing to our Lord.

I found our second reading this morning equally profound and important. In 1 Timothy Chapter 1 versus 12 -17, Timothy states:” I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would become to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.” Now, most of the people that we know are not former blasphemers, persecutors or people of violence. They are normal people that have not found Jesus Christ yet. They have not taken the time to understand the love, grace, and patience of Christ. It is our responsibility to show them the light, to help them along in Christ so that when their time comes...their time of death...and it will come, they will be with Christ. And with you, their friend and family. We all need the enthusiasm of Timothy when it comes to his belief and love for Jesus Christ. He certainly

shouted it from the highest mountains because he realized that he could have died without Christ. He could have died without Christ. Without his soul being committed to Him.

To Jesus, all peoples that have not found their way to Him and to God the Father are lost sheep. And he wants us to go all out looking for those lost sheep.

Bringing the sinners away from sin and into this flock. We are all sinners as you know, but we know the way to Christ. We repent and work harder to be of good faith with Christ. Others; many being our friends, family, acquaintances, and even strangers need our assistance to find their way to Christ. We are the Church of the Good Shepherd. Friends don't let friends die lost. Friends don't let friends die without the Lord by their side. Friends don't let friends die as sinners. Let us be their friend. It is a matter of life and death and eternity with Christ.

A read a story of an older lady that was on her death bed and her words to her family were these: "I am not afraid to die...but I am ashamed to die. God left me here on earth to ready others and I take no one with me." I think she may have been a little hard on herself as she was a Christian and a lover of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. I am sure she had a major impact on many people during her lifetime. But at that moment, when she was about to depart this life to go to meet her Lord, she wondered if she had done enough. Would Jesus be pleased or disappointed? I believe Jesus is never disappointed, but he certainly calls on each of us to do his work and make a difference on as many people as possible. It's our job here on earth as a follow of Jesus.

Friends don't let friend die and not go to be with Him in Heaven.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN