

Greetings to all those who really wish to be the church of Jesus Christ,

**SCRIPTURE:**

John 3:16-18 (MSG) – Larger reading: John 3:1-21

*“This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person’s failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.”*

**MODERN DAY PARABLE:** (author unknown)

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the church’s pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and, before he gave his sermon for the evening, he briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening.

In the introduction, the pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest childhood friends and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the church and share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service.

With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak. “A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific coast” he began. “When a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to the shore. The waves were so high, that even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized.”

The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in his story. The aged minister continued with his story, “Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life: to which boy would he throw the other end of the life line. He only had seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian and he, also, knew that his son’s friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves.

“As the father yelled out, ‘I love you, son!’ he threw out the life line to his son’s friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black night. His body was never recovered.”

By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister’s mouth. “The father,” he continued, “knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus and he could not bear the thought of

his son's friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son's friend."

With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair as silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal. Within minutes after the service ended, the two teenagers were at the old man's side.

"That was a nice story," politely stated one of them, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."

"Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face. He once again looked at the boys and said, "It sure isn't very realistic, is it? But, I'm standing here today to tell you that story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up his son for me, you see, I was that father and your pastor is my son's friend."

**QUOTE:**

*"So the divine love is sacrificial love. Love does not mean to have and to own and to possess. It means to be had and to be owned and to be possessed. It is not a circle circumscribed by self, it is arms outstretched to embrace all humanity with its grasp.*

– Fulton J. Sheen

**PRAYER:**

Lord, if I was placed in the father's position, in the story above, would would I do? Who would I save? What sacrifices am I willing to make so that someone else might come into a living relationship with Jesus Christ? That is a tough one, Lord, real tough. And I'm not sure how I would answer it until I'm faced with the situation. Amen.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

Jmartin450@tampabay.rr.com

386-795-5323

***Questions from Sunday's sermon: Do I side with the majority? Am I in the grip of fear? Have I lost my focus? ... See you in worship Sunday via Facebook.***