

## Trinity 3, 2017 The Lighthouse

1 St. Peter 5:5-11 / Luke 15: 1-7  
St. Andrew's Church – Jacksonville, OR  
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I was called up to customer service last week to handle an awkward situation. A man and a woman living on the street, both possessing criminal records and suffering from hunger, ask if they could take a watermelon from our sidewalk display. Not wanting to get in trouble for stealing they thought they would try their luck by asking in sincerity. Unfortunately we are not allowed to give food away to anyone for any reason, not even damaged food that will go into the garbage. This has always been a sore spot for me as I am sure it would be for all of you. (In a world of abundance that seems to have plenty to throw away, it is criminal in my mind that we deny those in need). While explaining to the man that I could not give him anything, I saw a look in his eyes that I took as honest despair. The weight of my refusal was too much for me to bare...I had the man wait right there and told him I would be right back. I went to the break room to get my wallet and took the man into the store and bought him and his girlfriend whatever they wanted and they left with grateful hearts.

Now, this is not a story that I would normally put out there for everyone to see. This is not some story I am using to pump myself up. I only tell it because something came out of this that made me step back and think...a grand realization if you will...or at least a great reminder of our place in the body of Christ.

In our Epistle from 1 St. Peter this morning we heard the following, *"Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."* I think if you live for the world it is easier to deny others the basic necessities than it is for those who walk in Christ Jesus. If you live for the world there are no heartstrings willing to touch a chord with those in need. If you live for the world, the world becomes a singular universe where only you exist. But for those in Christ, the world is a much different place...with the darkness at our backs we reflect the light of Christ as the Holy Spirit

works through us...we are in effect the grand Lighthouse that gives beauty as well as protection, light in the darkness and a way to safety and life. So...I rang the man up and I paid for his food and the light shined in his darkness. "Are you a Christian" he asked. It seems to be naturally expected that we, God's children, are the ones willing to sacrifice for others. He didn't just say thank you...he wanted to know if I were a Christian! A simple gesture of food opened the door for the Gospel.

As a lighthouse stands between the calm on one side and the storm on the other, we Christians can be the only source of salvific leading to those in the raging storm. We have all been there; we heeded the call when the waters rose around us and we found refuge because there were others who showed us the way by the light of their council. It is now our turn to sound the guiding siren so that those in the dark can change course. St. Peter reminds us to *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion waketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resisteth stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."* We may be safely in harbor...in the arms of a loving God, but there are those whom the devil has swamped...there are those who are so lost that they cannot see our light from their position.

If they cannot come to us...what can we do? *"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."* Christ entered the storm and so must we. The only way we can show the light of Christ to those trapped in the darkness of the storm is through humility, to share and be in communion with them...not in avoiding, but in relation. We are the lighthouse that must tread the waters and meet our brethren in the midst of the storm...we too were once lost sheep, but we have answered the light of Christ and now through us God is seeking the ONE who is still out there, lost and in desperation. It is not our turn to be judgmental and turn our lights to easier waters. We are called to enter and endure the storm that we through Christ may open the eyes of conversion that Christ may be seen and salvation realized.

*“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?”* Do we mock the homeless and mentally ill as they theatrically dance through the streets? Do we express our disgust at the filth they have to dress themselves in? Do we blame them when they steal for need? We may not condone the crimes they commit; we may not want to admit that what we abhor is the life they are trapped in. But, we do need to be open to the possibility that a lost sheep is calling out to be found...and to be saved.

You are a child of God and simply by living in edification of our Father in Heaven will inspire you to react when you hear a brother or sister call out, because we are all “subject to one another”. You may not even know that your actions have influenced a lost sheep into the flock of God, but we do know that if we cast all our care upon Him the path to the lost will be ever present before us and our love for God and the brethren will be a constant beacon for those seeking that refuge found in Christ.

The reaction of the man I helped reminded me in a most intense way that a Christian life live in edification of our Lord, without judgmentalism and qualification, can break down barriers, open doors, provide unity and respect...a Christian life lived properly can change lives. My friends...we have all been in that boat. Cast your lights into the waters and be a beacon of hope for those in need knowing that your faith is given you through the grace of Jesus Christ.

“Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me;  
Just as I am though tossed about with many a conflict many a doubt;  
Just as I am poor, wretched, blind; Sight riches, healing of the mind;  
Just as I am though wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
Just as I am thy love unknown has broken every barrier down;  
Just as I am of thy great love, the breadth, length, depth, and height to  
prove, here for a season, then above. O lamb of God, I come, I  
come. Amen.