

10-28-18

1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Spiritual Friendships

In the movie “Castaway,” Tom Hanks plays an employee of Federal Express. Early in the movie, he boards a jet plane and says good-bye to his girlfriend. He gives her the keys to his car and says, “I’ll be right back.”

Well, everyone who bought a ticket to that movie knew that wasn’t going to be. Because we all knew from the advertisements that this movie was about a man trying to survive on a deserted island after a terrible plane crash.

When the character played by Tom Hanks gave the car keys to his girlfriend, you wanted to scream out at him to keep the keys. Because hooked to the key chain was a Swiss Army knife.

Alone on a deserted island, you could use a knife like that.

After the crash, the lonely man walks the beach gathering debris from the crashed Federal Express plane. He opens the boxes looking for something to help him survive. Perhaps a Swiss Army knife or two.

But no.

Instead he finds things that, at least on the surface, seem useless.

Ice Skates. Yep, they would come in handy on a small tropical island.

Videotapes.

A volleyball.

Yet, in time each becomes useful. Including the volleyball. Tom Hanks draws a face on it one night and begins talking to it, in order to pass the time. He even addresses this volleyball by name – Wilson.

At first this seems to be just a way to entertain himself. But after five years of being alone on that island, this light-hearted source of entertainment becomes an obsession.

Right before making the decision to try to get off the island in a homemade boat, the character played by Tom Hanks becomes angry and frustrated and to express that anger he takes the volleyball named Wilson and throws it away, into the sea.

The marooned man watches the ball as it falls into the sea and suddenly realizes, “That was stupid.” And he goes after the ball. He risks his life rescuing his friend (the volleyball), swimming against the tide and among the rocky beach until at last he has in his hands his friend (the volleyball).

He looks at it and says, “Wilson. Wilson. I’m so sorry. I’ll never do that again.

Forgive me!” He says this to his friend (the volleyball).

Yep, at this point the viewer of the movie knows, this man has been alone on that island way too long.

There is a silliness in that moment, but the way Tom Hanks plays his part, it’s more tragic than silly.

We all desperately need friendships.

And it doesn't matter whether we are the only person on an island far from anyone else, or if we are in a crowd.

Paul McCartney once wrote in a song about loneliness in a crowd of others, "All the lonely people, Where do they all come from? All the lonely people, Where do they belong?"

Here at Servant of Christ we have six core values: Giving. Serving, Prayer, Worship, Biblical Literacy and Spiritual Friendships. Today we are going to be talking about Spiritual Friendships.

After I graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College a group of friends moved up to Minneapolis while I attended Luther Seminary in St. Paul. One of the friends in this group named Emily loved to dance. She loved to go out and dance to dj's, live music, in clubs or whatever. A few of us would go with her, some of us liked to dance, but Emily was always bummed out when she was overruled and we decide to just see a movie on a Friday night. So one night Emily said, "You know what? I need to put out an ad on-line that says, "Looking for Bestie to go out dancing with me all the time."

.So I got to thinking. What if you, like my friend Emily, were going to put out an on-line ad looking for a Spiritual Friend? What kind of qualities would you list in your ad as you look for a Spiritual Friend?

Take a minute to think about that.

What were some of the things that came to mind for you? Maybe someone who has compassion, or is a good listener. Maybe someone who is quick to remind you either through their words or actions that God loves you and so do I.

In First Corinthians Paul talks about the body of Christ and that all believers are members of the body of Christ. Paul shares this picture of the body of Christ where there are all of these different people with different talents whether it be teaching or hospitality or leadership. It is amazing to think that all of these different people with different talents and different gifts are placed together not just in our congregation but also the whole Christian church throughout the world.

Maybe some of you know this saying, "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family." It is usually used to remind us to be gentle with our family members. We didn't choose them, but we still love them. No matter what

they have done they are still family. But I want to suggest this morning that we can't really choose our spiritual friendships either.

I sometimes think that spiritual friendships happen when we are least looking for them. Spiritual friendships happen when people are working in the church kitchen to prepare a meal together, or teaching Sunday School or Confirmation together or are at a Bible Study or game night together or go on a mission trip together. That is when we are thrown together because of our one mission to plan and work together that all may know God's love.

My senior year at Gustavus Adolphus College I spent the month of January doing a ministry career exploration at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Mathomedi. Myself and five other students were assigned to serve in different areas of ministry during the month together and at the end of the month all of us were going on a Mission Trip to Jamaica.

While in Jamaica we went to an orphanage and some of the people helped put up new wall board, or paint the inside of some of the places the children lived in and others of us spent time with the children singing camp songs and telling Bible stories. It was a great week. At the end of the week, when we got to the airport the lines were long and not moving. There was no air conditioning and we

were all tired out. One of the young women in our group, named Jill started to sing in the airport to lighten the mood. I don't remember exactly what she was singing, but they were cheerful Christian songs like, "This Little light of mine ." etc after she was singing for a while she said to the other members in our group, "Come on everybody join in!" No one joined in. So I finally turned to her and said, "If you don't stop singing, I am going to make you stop singing." She got quiet immediately. Needless to say it was a tense plane ride home.

Fast forward about eight months. I am starting classes at Luther Seminary and who do I see at the orientation day, but Jill. And of course guilt washed over me about what I had said on the mission trip. So I talked to her and told her I was really sorry. I was out of line and I wouldn't do something like that again. Jill forgave me. We went through four years of seminary together. I was at her wedding. We often don't get to choose our spiritual friendships. Sometimes they choose us because we are all together focused on the mission of making Jesus known.

This has been a terrible weekend in the news. All of the hate that is happening in our country. Bombs sent in the mail, 11 people dead at a synagogue. We were able to come here this morning because we knew the body of Christ

would be here- those spiritual friendships waiting for us. There are no safe spaces anymore. Not schools. Not houses of worship. But there are brave spaces. Spaces where the light shines in the darkness. Spaces that are free from fear. May Servant of Christ be one of those brave spaces.

Gracious God you have knit us together in the body of you Son Jesus Christ our living Lord and Savior who has conquered death. Help us to be brave in being people of light to a dark and hurting world. In Jesus name we pray. AMEN>