

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—2019

Those of US who are into texting--have you ever wished you could take back a text after you hit the “send” button? I read recently that there is now an app or application for that. After sending a friend an embarrassing text herself, Maci Peterson, a Washington, D.C., entrepreneur, created a mobile app that lets users take back those text messages they immediately wish they hadn’t sent. The app, which she calls *On Second Thought*, has two main features: A recall function that gives the user up to 60 seconds to reclaim a text before it’s sent. And a “curfew” setting which holds all text messages until a designated time. Say you’re out late one night and tee many martunis and don’t trust the condition you’re in. You might want to review your text the following morning and check to make sure your text message is something you really want to send before it actually goes out. The app automatically holds your text for you until the next day.

Of course, some people are hopeless. There isn’t an app that will help them. They blurt out whatever they have on their mind, or they leap without looking regardless of how thoughtless or how inappropriate the thought or the act is. And, we know that this can happen at all levels of leadership and authority. Some never learn. But you and I are smarter than that. We can learn from past experiences. We can sit down, think things through and come to some logical conclusions. That is all Jesus is asking out of us.

Some people think of Christianity as being primarily an emotional experience. Nothing could be further from the truth. Christ wants us to think things through. He wants us to count the cost. In other words, there really is no such thing as a blind acceptance of faith. Embracing faith in Jesus means that we have given thought to what we are doing we know what we are doing. It doesn’t necessarily mean that we know in advance all the consequences of following Jesus and what he asks of us, but it is the confidence that whatever comes our way, with the Lord we will be able to handle it.

Think how many tragedies would be avoided if people simply sat down a few moments and thought through the consequences of their actions with regard to things that really matter to them. Think how many homes would still be intact, think how many prison cells would be empty, think how many lives would be spared if folks would just think first!

One of the most important pieces of information that we can have in our lives is knowing where to draw the line. Thinking of those areas of life that are most important to us—our family, our health, our reputation, etc.—things we really don’t want to damage or even lose, we need to see how important it is that we know where to draw a line around them—a line that we will not

cross. Deep down, we all know that it is very important that we give a thought to those things that are really important in our lives. That is why our relationship with God is so important in our lives. It reminds us of some of the lines we dare not cross. When that relationship is broken we are vulnerable to all kinds of temptations.

The other side of the same coin is that our relationship with God reminds of the line we need to cross. As we just heard in the Gospel, when Jesus taught about counting the cost before building a tower, his real concern was not architecture or construction. He was advising potential followers about what it meant to be his disciple. He concluded this teaching with these words: “In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.” At first hearing, that statement is a real room clearer. How many of us really want to take this religion business that far? Yet that is the demand Christ makes of every one of us if we would be his disciple. That is a line that we need to cross, and that is the line that separates those who follow Jesus from those who do not. Once we cross that line, something special is expected out of us, and that is that we dedicate everything we are and everything we hope to be to following him. And why shouldn't Christ expect that out of us? People all the time are committing themselves to matters of far less importance.

What Jesus asks of us doesn't mean we now have live at the church. The call to renounce everything is not a call to everyone to become a full-time church worker. Rather, it is a call to make our entire life—our work, our play, our family relationships, everything—pleasing in God's sight. The ironic thing is that when we renounce everything else for Christ's sake, we gain more than we lose. We find that in pleasing God, we ultimately please ourselves. There is not much more in life that is so comforting and life giving than knowing that we are right with God, even though we don't always do it perfectly. Bottom line, the good and long-lasting stuff comes to us because God's way leads to life.

And so, one of the things that Christ asks of us is that we use our brains. If we believe that he the Savior of the world, doesn't it make sense to align our lives with his and what he asks of us? “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?” we can save ourselves a lot of problems and find what we are truly looking for in life by simply thinking through what really matters in your life and then acting on it. While it will cost us, sometimes a lot, in the end, it will really be worth. And, as I like to say, the benefits are out of this world.