

My story of the month 3-1-2017

Terry

A few weeks ago, I traveled to Florida to visit a young man I had coached in youth basketball on the island with my son when he was ten. Though from Bainbridge, his beginning was different than that of my son. My son, off to college, and then business! He off to heroine addiction for 18 years! I saw him very close to death so many times. All his ties broken long ago, living in garbage can, really, in Bremerton.

I told him I think the one thing that we should all tell those most broken. "No matter how ugly you get, no matter what lie you tell me, you are not going to shake me. I am going to dog you until you have a life." Though it took much longer than I thought, the seeds of faith passed out along the way, fallen on barren ground, I simply was there next him. He ended in jail, which put him even in more danger. On the streets, either he would soon die from the blood clots in his legs or from the wrath of the gang who thought him now a snitch. Truly immersed in darkness and near death he was when I sent him off to live with a hardly known sister who agreed to take him in. He soon found a job, and a church and even saved enough for a car, but the devil was not far from him, as sin is always tapping at our shoulder, and with heroine it is more than tapping. He used again, and then was homeless, again, now with no one, in Florida.

A small church, from local donations (only) had decided to buy an abandoned firehouse. From those meager donations, and the work of many simple unknown saints, they offered five addicted men food, housing, clothing, faith training, and job training for a year for free. Free! Fast-forward ten years or so, with little help other than that of real people of faith kicking in funds and time **to do Christ's work for the lifting** of the least lovable, today they house 60 men one location, 60 women in another, and I am told, a place for 30 homeless women (for them, they add to that childcare, and job training). One little congregation joined along another and another. Simple Christians dying to self for others. They really are the hand of Christ. With prayer every morning noon and night, and plenty of faith in between, the Matthew house today has one of the best success ratios, I know of, in the country. It is called the Matthew House - check it out - donate if you like (stmatthewshouse.org)!

This was my third return visit since my young friend was baptized there, now near four years free and clean, and on fire for Christ. He is one of the best counselors I know of to those addicted. God used his 18 years of addiction to prepare him to love others. I went to celebrate his birth and his freedom, as I do each year now. He is a remarkable human being, having had a hand in the saving of dozens now, maybe a saint himself someday. If feel like I have an adopted son.

This year, though, my trip was different. I had someone accompany me. Eight years ago, I met my traveling partner in prison. It was his first cursillo (kairos) event. When I met him, he told me that he had not had a visit, letter, or call for over seven years. When I am in prison, I wonder where the Christians are. I wonder even more if they have read the end of Matthew. **My new friends' cursillo had him meet Jesus The Christ** and all would thereafter be different. He was freed a year ago, never thinking that he would ever be reunited with his Dad and family, but, as God would have it, His father picked him up and took him to lunch at the very place where he many time had

dreamed of returning to from prison.

In the eight years I have known him, Christ had not only made a new man out of him but also restored him to his family. Sadly enough, upon his release, he found out that his own young son was addicted to heroine. Seven months ago we sent his son to Florida. I saw a miracle I think that arriving night when he walked into the building where they live and pray. The Father and son then both met and hugged and cried for near five minutes. NO words, just tears of Joy! His son has himself now been 8 months free and clean. He made us breakfast. Then we went fishing together and they talked for hours. Amazing Grace!

My traveling partner, a master carpenter is now full-time working, takes no welfare, has his own car, pays taxes and sends gifts to men in prison with what is left over. He gets it! The world will forever think and call him a felon, but I think of him as simply a man of God. Tell everyone what God has done for me how He has set me free.

I asked him on the plane home, "eight years ago, did you ever think you would be traveling with me to Florida for this soul returning - life restoring visit with your son?" Not having worshipped with him since he was **six years of age, He replied: "Not in my wildest dreams!"**

He truly leads us in paths of righteousness. He truly restores our souls.

I wondered if some of you could take it upon yourself to help the next group coming to their cursillo. Could you write few notes to them? Would you pray for them? Could you be so courageous as was Christ on the Cross to die to self and visit one of them? They are not evil men. **Just severely wounded, mostly from childhood, most didn't have a father,** most addicted because they needed relief from the darkness that surrounded their childhood. In the ten years now I have been ministering to them now, I have heard many of their childhood stories. You would not like them. Could you help lift them? I pray that you might hear me or more than that you hear our Lord in this regard. Helping men in prison is not my gift. It is simply my obedience. When you visit men or women in prison, you truly meet Christ.

I have this settled now deep in my soul. One thing I know for certain, psalms 23 is truth.

Each Day is a Gift!

Terry

P.S. **Now that's what I call a winter vacation!**