

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 6/7/2024
Welcoming All Who Come

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

An alcoholic friend of Philip Yancey once said to him: "When I'm late to church, people turn around and stare at me with frowns of disapproval. I get the clear message that I'm not as responsible as they are. When I'm late to AA, the meeting comes to a halt, and everyone jumps up to hug and welcome me. They realize that my lateness may be a sign that I almost didn't make it. When I show up, it proves that my desperate need for them won out over my desperate need for alcohol."

How often do we react negatively when someone's behavior isn't what we think it ought to be? How many times has someone gone away feeling like they really aren't welcome? We are GOD's representatives. Yet too often we communicate an attitude that is definitely not what GOD wants people to feel.

Remember the parable called "The Prodigal Son." After a son had left his family and squandered his wealth on questionable living, he returned home. His older brother (representing us too often) looked at him disdainfully and wondered why he was even being allowed back. If he'd had it his way, he would have banished his brother never to return.

Yet the father (representing GOD) not only welcomed his son back but ran to meet him as he came near. To show that he was welcome back in the family, the father had the ring with the family crest placed on his finger. To celebrate his return, the father threw him a party. It was not about where he had been or what he had done in the past. It was not about how he arrived. It was simply about the fact that he had come. And that was worth celebrating.

Our goal should always be to let the one who comes know they are welcome. The table around which JESUS invites us to sit is big and there is room for everyone. Our task is not to decide who can sit and who cannot. The invitation is for all and we are to welcome and celebrate the arrival of each person, making sure that they have a place and that they feel welcome. JESUS did no less for us.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey