

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 12/12/2022

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, December 13, you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for justice. Ask GOD to bring freedom to those who are unjustly imprisoned, for actions that foster inclusivity and equality, and for fair treatment for all people. Pray that GOD leads you to speak and act in ways that further the unconditional love that GOD has for everyone.*

Is boycotting someone who is discriminatory...well...discriminatory?

Recently I read an article about a restaurant that canceled a reservation for a nonprofit group just over an hour before their scheduled gathering at the restaurant. Employees of the restaurant had looked up the group and found that they were a conservative Christian organization whose beliefs included traditional views on marriage and opposition to abortion. The restaurant prides itself on being an “inclusive environment” and many of the staff are women and/or members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) community. The staff of the restaurant felt uncomfortable serving a group whose views were discriminatory toward people like the employees.

It got me wondering if their action, because of the discriminatory nature of the guest group, was also discriminatory.

Sometimes trying to make choices as Christians can be difficult.

Some years ago, my aunt, a Lutheran pastor's wife, sent an email encouraging those of us who received the email to eat at Chick-fil-A because they are owned by Christians. A couple years later, she emailed to ask her readers to boycott Chick-fil-a because their owner has made donations to organizations that are hostile toward LGBTQ+ rights. My aunt cared deeply about all people and wanted everyone to be seen as a child of GOD and deserving of equal treatment. She felt that an organization whose owner supported discriminatory actors should be avoided. Which action should I, as Christian take? Support a Christian owned restaurant or avoid them because of their support of non-inclusive organizations. This question became further confused following the mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, a dance club for the LGBTQ+ community. The morning following the shooting, the local Chick-fil-A restaurant provided free sandwiches to the first responders carrying for the LGBTQ+ victims of that shooting. So, what's a Christian to do?

It is important that we, as Christians, strive to make decisions that uphold the values and teachings that CHRIST set forth in the Bible. Sometimes that can leave us with real dilemmas. During the Civil War, those on both sides of the slavery issue used the Bible to support their position. What do you do when you just aren't sure what JESUS would call you to do?

I think Martin Luther can help us. At least to a degree, anyway. Luther said that there are times when we won't know what is the right action, the Christian action, for us to take. Further, there will be times when any action we take will be sinful. (Discriminate against those who discriminate?) In these situations, Luther says we should “sin boldly.” Luther is not saying that we should go out looking for opportunities to sin. Rather in these occasions where we can't know the right course, or where acting or not acting is sinful, we should seek GOD'S guidance, be upfront about our concern and our recognition of the sin inherent in our decision, and then, trusting GOD'S grace, make our choice and “sin boldly.”

This is how we come before GOD. We acknowledge and confess our sins, and our struggle to be faithful. We admit those occasions where we have failed to follow CHRIST and those times where we could find no action (or lack thereof) that wasn't sinful. And then we fall on the grace of GOD seeking the forgiveness that comes in CHRIST. In our dilemmas, we seek GOD'S guidance and then sin boldly and put our hope in GOD'S grace. Luther puts it this way: "We sin boldly, but let our trust in CHRIST be stronger, and rejoice in CHRIST who is the victor over sin, death, and the world."

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey