

Women's Sunday – June 3, 2012

Roxanne Johnson

BFF or FFN

(Best Friends Forever or Friends For Now)

INTRODUCTION

- **Good Morning**
- **Asked to talk today about friendship and God's hand in our friendships**
- **Thank You** Tracy & Laurel for your friendship, and your creative leadership of PWOC
- **Thank You** God for planting the seed of this congregation, for the richness of 50 years of service in His name, and the fruitful ground that it is for worship, spiritual growth, service, fellowship and friendship
- **I believe Gods speaks to us in signs** – While preparing for today, James Taylor came on the radio singing “You've Got A Friend.”
- **People reaching out to me in friendship** is one of the biggest reasons I have been comfortable here at CCPC, and why it has been so meaningful to be a part of this congregation.
- I only hope that I have paid it forward and been the one reaching out to others and welcoming them as I was welcomed.
- While I thought I had a pretty good idea of what it meant to be a friend, I started my preparation for my remarks today by looking in Webster's Dictionary for the definition of “Friend” – ***one attached to another by affection or esteem, an acquaintance, a favored companion.***

- **Hatfield's & McCoy's mini series – were friends**, comrades in battle – in fact they saved each other's lives – and then allowed retaliation over a stolen pig to turn into generations of brutality and destruction
- **Too bad they didn't have a better understanding of what friendship really is!**

SCRIPTURE

- **Searched for Inspiration from Scripture – Found a beautiful guide for friendship – to both strangers and those familiar to us – in Romans Chapter 12 –**
- **These verses were also an integral element in my father's memorial service five years ago – and since my father was one of my best friends, it seemed very appropriate to include it here today!**
- **So listen for the Word of God in this additional scripture reading**

Romans 12:3 and 9-21

(from The Message Translation)

3 – I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of us does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

9 – 21 – Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE GOD'S HAND IS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR FRIENDSHIPS

- **Think about your friends – the ones you spend time with now, the ones who were so special to you growing up – and the variety of ways God has placed these people into your life**

- **Friendship is a huge responsibility**
- **Learning to be a good, and trusted friend utilizes all the FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT catalogued in Galatians – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**
- **God’s providence is evident when good friends walk into our circumstances, and along side us throughout our lives**
- **I’ve been blessed with good friends in all stages of my life**
- **Received another sign while having lunch at the Cracker Barrel in Waldorf last weekend:**

*“Good friends are like angels –
you don’t have to see them to know they are there.”*

- **First Friends – Carol Vaughn**
- **School Friends – Long Time Friends You Seldom See -- High school “gang of friends” – reunion in August**
- **Work Friends – (THE PIA CONNECTION), EDNA (she’s old enough to be my mother), TERESA (I’m old enough to be her mother), and BETTY (my own age)**
- **Church Friends – Retreat, Youth Group Parents, Circle, Committees, Mission Work – the friendships made here at CCPC have inspired me to grow in every area of my life and given me the strength and courage to do things I never dreamed I would be able to do – like Christmas Families, going to Honduras and speaking here today!**
- **Neighbors – Claudia (former neighbor, grew into a good and trusted friend, and now my Christian Sister!**
- **Boyfriends – Buddy (my brothers’ friend growing up) – turns out he’s the love of my life, and my new best friend!**

- **Family** – can be some of your best friends! But family relationships can also be problematic.
- **Recently spent the day in Ellicott City with some friends and family**

“Friends Always Welcome – Relatives by Appointment”

- **Mom** – like my Father is also one of my best friends, she was a bridesmaid in my wedding 30 years ago!
- **Amanda and Kyle** – while are still fairly young adults, I see our relationship having a friendship element to it too
- **Tammy** – we just “clicked” when we first met 30 years ago, and we are very good friends – she is one of my favorite travelling companions!

THERE IS EVEN SUPPORT IN THE SCIENTIFIC ARENA THAT FRIENDS ARE GOOD MEDICINE

- You probably won't be surprised to learn that friends are good for your health – especially as we grow older.
- Humans have always relied on friendship.
- Many studies over the years have found that people generally live longer, happier, healthier lives if they have a strong network of support from friends and family.
- Friendships are hardly ever simple, and it's challenging building and keeping the kind of connections that last a lifetime and truly make life better. But I have heard many stories of friendships right here in our congregation that have stood the test of time.

- And it is definitely worth the effort! Good friendships seem to be especially helpful for the health of your heart – literally!
- I found a three-year Swedish study of more than 13,600 men and women that showed those with close friendship bonds decreased the risk of having a first-time heart attack by about 50 percent.
- **This study also discovered an added bonus – Women in the study who enjoyed close support from friends were less likely to have excessive abdominal fat!**

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT THAT WAS MUSIC TO MY EARS

Music is another way we express the importance of friendship.

When I was a young Girl Scout, we learned a nice little song that has come to the front of my mind on many occasions. You may know it too. I'll sing it for you and you'll hear why it's better for me to be singing in the pews instead of with the choir!!

*“Make new friends, but keep the old.
One is silver and the other's gold.”*

THERE'S ANOTHER FAMILIAR HYMN THAT REMINDS US OF THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIP, SPECIFICALLY FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS. IT OPENS WITH . . .

*“What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.”*

- Jesus is one friend we can ALWAYS count on
- **Background on the lyrics of this song**
- Written by Joseph Scriven in 1857
- Born in Dublin, Ireland in 1819
- Educated Man – Graduate of Trinity College
- Migrated to Canada at age 25 after losing his fiancé to a drowning accident the night before their scheduled wedding
- Took *Sermon on the Mount* literally
- Had a heart for mission work – **would have fit in nicely here at CCPC!**
- Story is told of a man observing Scriven working diligently in the streets in Port Hope, Ontario with his sawbuck and saw.
- Asked “Who is that? I want him to work for me.”
- He was told, **“You cannot get that man; he saws wood ONLY for poor widows and sick people who cannot pay.”**
- Because of this he was well respected, but was also considered eccentric.
- His was the kind of life that gave inspiration to write the poem that was later set to music

WE'VE HEARD JAMES & GARY BEGIN THE DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS MANY TIMES – “FRIENDS, HEAR THE GOOD NEWS”

- *I too have heard those words many times before, but they had a different meaning when I heard Gary deliver them last week*

So Remember, God places us exactly where we are supposed to be, and He places other people in our path to be our friends. Some friends are to be in our lives forever, some just for a time. Sometimes for us to show God's love to another, other times for them to open our hearts and see God's love in them, but oftentimes for us to be God's love for each other.

As Reverend James said a few weeks ago in his sermon titled “The Person Who Tells the Best Story Wins”:

“You go nowhere by accident
Wherever you go, God is sending you.”

That is true for each of us, and God is sending us to be a friend, and to find a friend. So I challenge you to keep your old friends – cherish them as the gold that they are – but also go out and make some new friends, the silver lining to every cloud.

It's good for your health, and your waistline!

Amen!