

Chaplain's Bulletin July 30, 2023



Dear Folks,

In 1961 there was an episode of the Andy Griffith Show in which Andy's son Opie meets and befriends a hobo, David Browne, who lives by petty larceny and conning people. Opie was getting attracted to that lifestyle, and Andy confronted the hobo.

David Browne "Well Sheriff, maybe I do look at things differently than other people. Is that wrong? I live by my wits. I'm not above bending the law now and then to keep clothes on my back or food in my stomach. I live the kind of life that other people would just love to live if they only had the courage. Who's to say that the boy would be happier your way or mine? Why not let him decide?"

Andy Taylor: "Nah, I'm afraid it don't work that way. You can't let a young 'un decide for himself. He'll grab at the first flashy thing with shiny ribbons on it, then when he finds out there's a hook in it, it's too late. The wrong ideas come packaged with so much glitter it's hard to convince him that other things might be better in the long run, and all a parent can do is say, 'Wait. Trust me.' And try to keep temptation away."

A video clip of that has been popping up on social media.

Of course, we adults have to make decisions, but we still have a tendency to be drawn to shiny things with ribbons and glitter, and we can still get caught by the hook. Wisdom is one of the ongoing themes in the Bible, and we need wisdom, and the ultimate source of wisdom is God. A critical component of wisdom is discerning what is valuable and what is worthless. If you've ever seen something at the store and thought that it would be wonderfully useful, and then ten years later found it on a shelf still unused (Believe me, I have), you understand such discernment is harder than one may think. Here are some Biblical reflections:

"Two evils my people have done: they have forsaken me, the source of living waters; they have dug for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water (Jeremiah 2:13). "You know that in Israel it rains in the winter, but never the summer, so you must catch rainwater when it falls and store it in cisterns to survive the summer. A broken cistern spells doom.

"Thus says the Lord: cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, who makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a barren bush in the wasteland, that endures no change of season, but stands in lava beds in the wilderness, a land salty and uninhabited. Blessed are those who trust in the Lord; the Lord will be their trust. They are like a tree planted beside the waters, that stretches out its roots to the stream; it does not fear heat when it comes; its leaves stay green; in the year of drought, it shows no distress, but still produces fruit (Jeremiah 17:5-8; see Psalm 1)."

“Who may go up the mountain of the Lord? Who can stand in his holy place? The clean of hand and pure of heart, who has not given his soul to useless things, what is vain (Psalm 24:3-4).”

“And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:9-11).”

It’s not as simple as thinking we should just go back to the way they used to do things. “Do not say: how is it that former times were better than these? For it is not out of wisdom that you ask about this (Ecclesiastes 7:10).” Things like Catholic Social teaching, Theology of the Body, and daily Scripture reading can do a lot to help.

When God’s teaching seems to be spoiling our happiness, it is worthwhile to remember that our perception can be skewed toward sin, and so we may want to look deeper into His teaching.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim