

Sermon Notes
“That’s What Friends Are For”

Martino Cartier @ Gloucester County Community Church

I. Intro- Have you ever believed a lie?

So, what are friends for? Friends are people who tell you the truth whether you like it or not.

He’s the greatest friend we could ever have. Friends tell you the truth.

I was told a lie when I was 10. I was told that a baby that wasn’t baptized wound up in purgatory. For those of you that don’ know what that is, its limbo. So those babies wind up, not heaven, not in hell, but somewhere in the middle. And I said to my CCD teacher, show me in the Bible where that’s true. And She said to me, here’s a pamphlet, and I said “A pamphlet?” You mean, it’s not in the Bible? You know the B-I-B-L-E, yes that’s the book for me. You taught me that song. And it wasn’t and it was at that moment that I knew that I would never got to CCD again. I went home and told why mother.

And there’s a reason why the last four verses in the Bible are the most profound verses in the Bible.

19 And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. 20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

You know, there’s a reason why lies aren’t good, They deter people from coming to churching, believing in God, and finding everlasting life.

When I was about 12, I remembering I was all dressed up and went to Angelo’s Diner.

A man says, “you look so dapper. Where are you going this morning” I said “I’m going to church” He said, “Are you going to St. Bridgets?” I said “No, I’m going to Gloucester County Community Church”. He said “Gloucester Church? That cult? That fake minister. He says he’s saving all this money, going to build a church debt-free! You mark my words young man. He’s gonna take that money and run to Venezuela!”

I was so mad! I stormed right up to Pastor Bruce who barely knew me at the time. I pointed my finger and I said “Are you taking this money and running to Venezuela? He look at me, He laughed and said “No, I’m going to build a church and its going to be debt-free.”

I helped build this platform with his father and if I had believed the lie that I was told at Angelo’s Diner and decided to never come back, thousands of lives would never have been touched, including my own.

and she believed a life of lies for a very long time. I’m going to make the story short, but at the end of the day, she dealt with racism, people not liking her because of her weight. She dealt with a lot of things and one of the things she shared with me that she never shared before was, when her grandmother raised her as a little 5 year old girl, she taught her to honor her mother and father. Not honor them if they are good, not only honor them if they are right, just honor them. And then the day came that her mother was dying. Her mother never told her she loved her. And Oprah got the call and she went to visit her moth. She said “Mom, is there anything you want to say?” She said “No” She said, you need anything? She said “No”. She said “Okay, then I’ll see ya”. Mom said “See ya” And Oprah left knowing that if it were anyone else in her shoe, she would tell them to have that talk with their mom. She said “I am Oprah Winfrey, I have interviewed over 37,000 people one on one and I can’t think of one thing to say to my mother. So I went back and I said Mom, I have something to say to you. You were never the mother I wanted but you were 16, you were poor, you were pregnant and you were told to abort that baby. And you didn’t which made you the mother I always needed.”

A few weeks before when I did this sermon in March of 2020, there was a woman in the bookstore who had been going to this church for a long time

and she said to me “Ya know, I’ve never met you, but it’s nice to meet you” and I said “its nice to meet you too.” And Janet Buck was at the register and she said I’ve been coming ever since I saw the Easter Play and you were playing Jesus. And it hit me that we have to have a Friends Service. And I had thought about it- all the people over the years that I’ve asked to come to church and would say “if I go to that church, the walls will crumble, if I go to that church, it’ll catch on fire”.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Before I even get into this sermon, I would like you to hear these words from Dez Childs and see the names of those that were changed because someone was a friend to someone who needed to know the Lord.

Did you hear those words? A missionary came to your church, his pictures made you cry. You didn’t have much money but you gave it anyway. Jesus took that gift you gave and that’s why I’m here today. I want you to think about it and I’m going to personalize it.

I was very young and a woman came to me to get her hair done, a lovely woman. Her name was Mary Gabrielli. When Mary was young, she and her girlfriends would go to a payphone outside the Army barracks and they would call the payphone inside of the barracks to see if a guy would answer. And one day, Mary made that call and this guy picked up the phone. They started talking, they started dating, they got married.

His name was Frank Gabrielli. Frank became one of my clients too and back then I didn’t have two pennies to rub together. Frank had a very successful business. He loved to fish and I loved to fish.

And Frank used to say to me, “Ya know I’m going to Costa Rica, if you want to come, we catch really big marlin. I said “How much does the trip cost?” He said “\$5000”. I didn’t have \$5 so I was never able to go. And then Frank build this beautiful custom home. I wanted to be Frank. Frank had a successful business, he lived a wonderful life. I wanted to be Frank. And then, years go by. I get to play Jesus here at the church. I wanted

Frank to come see me. Frank said “You want me to what? If I walk in that church, those walls will crumble and that place will burn to the ground”.

I said “Frank c’mon!” He said “Martin” because that’s what Frank called me, he said “I love you but I’m an atheist. I’m sorry, I’m not going”. Years went on and the economy crashed. Frank lost his business. On top of losing his business, Frank developed ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. I was heart broken. I loved Frank and I knew what the end of this story was going to be.

So, I decided to have a fundraiser for ALS. And We raised \$13,000 for ALS of greater Philadelphia in his honor.

Now, it starts to hit me. Frank is an atheist. How can I let someone that I love and care about die, not believing in God. So I go to Frank’s house and I said “Frank, I have to talk to you about something and its very difficult for me to do.” He said “Whats that?” I said “What if you’re wrong and I’m right? If you’re wrong and I’m right, you’re the only one that loses” And he said “Martin, how can I believe in something I can’t see, I can’t hear. It just doesn’t make sense” I said “Frank, I don’t know but I know this. 7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” Matthew 7:7-8

So I left that day and Frank fell, he was in the hospital and it wasn’t looking good. They texted me that this was it. I texted back, “Its not it because I’m praying. And I know my God” And ya know what? that day, he blinked. And the daughter texted me and said “my father blinked” I said “Yeah, well I know because my dad is in control”. I went to see him again and I said “Frank, listen to me. Just do me a favor. Can you just say Hey! Yo! Buddy, if you’re real, Can you just kinda show me something?”

He said “Fine! I’ll do it! But I’m doing it for you” I said “I don’t care why you do it, just do it”.

I don’t have a lot of time today but this is what I can tell you. I don’t know what he heard but weeks later, I got the call. Frank heard, he got saved, baptized and shortly after, he went to be with the Lord. And one day, when

I get there and I see him walking on the streets of gold, he will be one of those people that says "Thank you!"

Frank left me in his will, he left me the marlin from the trip that I couldn't go on with him when I was young. Its hanging in my office. And a bottle of scotch with a note.

Denny

I have one more story for you. I have a very close friend that I invited to this church a gazillion years ago. She has served in this church as an usher. She is my son's godmother. Wonderful person, wonderful family, wonderful children. We became so close, we spent every holiday together for countless years. And her husband because one of my really good friends. Just like Frank, I would invite him to come to church, more aggressive than Frank. And because we were friends, he felt comfortable saying "Cult! I'm not going to that cult just because you're a bible thumper!". Whats a bible thumper by the way?

So he wouldn't come and years and years and years go by. He wouldn't come. He was young, healthy, thin, the whole nine. And then one day, he was going through something and he called me up, broken... very upset. And he said "I think I want to go to church with you" and I remember we sat up in the balcony right about there, and that day we sang "Still" which was one of the songs we sang today. When it said "when the oceans rise and thunders roar, I will soar with you above the storm. Father, you are king over the flood. I will be still and know You are God'. The tears came and Denny gave his life to the Lord just like that. I couldn't believe it. He gave his life to the Lord, after all these years of calling me a bible thumper and I go to a cult and all this crazy stuff. He gave his life to the lord. He was instantly changed, a completely different person.

And it was just before Easter and I thought, I can't believe it. I said "God you are so stinking awesome! That my friend is going to come see me in the play after all these years!" So Easter came! Back then, we did the play on Easter. I don't know why we don't anymore. Sorry PB!. It was Easter Sunday and I'm going through the shows and I'm peaking with one eye and I'm looking and I'm trying to see, and I don't see Denny at any of the shows. So its the last show and I'm sure he's coming. Or maybe I missed

him, maybe he did come to one of them and I just didn't see him. Its hard to see when the lights are shining in your face, ya know? So its the last show, and they take me off the cross and they place me in my mother's arms and I'm reenacting the scene. I'm playing dead but I'm looking at all of you out there, drying to find Denny. And I can't find him, so I'm like its fine. I know for sure, for sure he came.

So I get off the lift at the end of the play and I'm exhausted. I've got bruises, cuts, slimy with all sorts of stuff on me under my robe. I'm limping, we had done like 12 shows. I'm limping, they beat the heck out of me, ya know? And get into the choir room behind this back wall and I'm getting ready to go to Pastor's office where all my stuff is, my phone my keys, I leave everything in his office. And someone comes running to me, and says "you're phone won't stop ringing! Non-stop!" So I go grab my phone and I missed countless calls... countless text messages... My friend Denny died on Easter in the shower, getting ready to come see the play. I'm like what?! What?! He had a brain aneurism. Nobody knew it. His son, 13 years old at the time, found him... devastated... Marco, Matteo, Dana, Denise... the whole family obviously destroyed.

And I said to God "Are you kidding me?! After all these years, are you kidding me?! He's finally coming to see me in the play!!!" God said "Are you kidding me? You're mad that he didn't get to see you in the play as Jesus? Guess what moron?! He got to be with the real Jesus on Easter Sunday!" That is why we are having Bring A Friend Weekend.

That is exactly why and I'm telling you! Listen to me, the energy will be so infectious that it can't do anything less than change your life. The balls on the pendulum! Everybody knows what they are, when one ball hits, it forces the other one to go and then that comes back and that hits.

It's called when you give, it comes back, pressed down, shaken together, running over and whatever you do unto the least of these... you know what that means? It means when you hold the door for someone, you're holding it for God. It means when you give someone a gift, you're giving it to God. It means when you give someone love, you're giving it to god and I'm telling you when you invite someone next weekend, may the energy be so infectious, may you be so full that your cup runneth over. And after Bring A Friend Weekend, make sure you invite them back because that is

the weekend for the Easter Play "So Loved" I love you all! I will see you all next week!