

Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter: whoever finds one has found a treasure. Ecclesiasticus 6:14

On the way home from visiting my family, I went through Clifton, Texas. As I approached the town, I remembered that a friend of mine from Seminary was serving as interim pastor there. I decided to stop by and see if he was there. The administrative assistant answered the door and I asked if the pastor was there. She said he was, and I told her to tell him, "Charles Parnell is here and he wants to know if he gives money to needy folks." She laughed and led me to him where she relayed my message. Bill, always the comedian, asked the man who was with him if he had any money to give Pastor Parnell.

Bill is godfather to Aaron, and it was good to visit with him. I had intended to spend only a few minutes. Two hours later, I reluctantly left. While I hadn't seen Bill in some years, we had recently written snail mail letters to each other. Bill has always been good at communicating; me not so good. I found it interesting that we conversed with each other as if we had been in daily conversation. I think back to all the things that we shared in common, ministry, Scotch and chess, to name a few. I am blessed to call him friend, even more blessed that he calls me friend.

Ben Sirach, who wrote Ecclesiasticus, reminds us how important true friendship is. We meet a lot of people who we call friends, but few who truly are friends. In the same passage, Ben Sirach warns, "**Keep away from your enemies and be on guard with your friends.**" It is a reminder how rare true friends are.

Like marriage, I think friendship is a gift from God. As we journey through our lives, friends make the joys, burdens, hardships and celebrations better. Jesus told his disciples, "I have called you friends." It was a great compliment. To Jesus, they were more than students to mold and form. They were friends sharing his journey.

Let me close with some more words of wisdom from Ben Sirach. "**Faithful friends are life-saving medicine; and those who fear the Lord will find them.**"

May God bless you with faithful friends.

Pastor Parnell