

## Proper 18 A

**”Love one another with mutual affection;  
outdo one another in showing honor.”**

“Forgiveness, is the soul’s additive for getting the most mileage out of our walk with God.”

Concerned about gas prices and fuel economy? Some people are avoiding unnecessary trips to the grocery store and stocking up. No more sitting idle at the McDonald’s Drive-thru. Long trips by car may be out for awhile. It may be time to get another look see under the hood for a tune up.

It is recommended that we all change our fuel usage habits: be less aggressive, slow down to 55 mph, maintain one’s vehicle, plan out your trips by shopping smarter and using reliable directions.

No matter where you live and what you drive, you can maximize every gallon of fuel. And everyone has become an expert and ready to tell us how.

Let’s not be pessimistic. Some of these suggestions may work if we can afford them.

AutoZone and the EPA are advising people to make sure air filters are clean. Don't forget little things like the air in your tires. Having tires inflated to the maximum recommended pressure

can improve gas mileage by as much as 6 percent, while periodic wheel alignments can help improve fuel economy up to 10 percent. A new oxygen sensor alone can improve gas mileage by as much as 15 percent, according to, a car parts store. HOW MUCH MORE WILL THESE PARTS AND SERVICES COST? WHAT WILL IT COST IF THIS ADVICE IS NOT FOLLOWED?

Extra weight decreases gas mileage. According to AutoZone, every 200 pounds of unnecessary weight shaves one mile per gallon off your fuel mileage. LEAVE YOUR SPOUSE HOME!

Change your driving style. Accelerate gradually, drive smoothly and with care and you could see as much as a 20 percent gain in fuel economy compared with what you'd get with an aggressive driving style, the EPA says. Skip those jackrabbit starts and sudden pedal-to-the-metal maneuvers if you want to save gas. DON'T BE IN A HURRY!

**Don't speed.** A car or truck moving at 55 miles an hour can get about 15 percent better fuel economy than the same car going 65 mph. HAVE YOU EVER TRIED GOING 55 FROM

## JANESVILLE TO MADISON? HOW MANY OF US WILL HEED THESE WARNINGS?

Don't sit idle too long. Don't waste fuel by sitting in that drive-thru lane at McDonald's or Taco Bell. Park and go inside instead. Don't let your vehicle idle as you wait outside the elementary school to pick up your children. Idling uses more fuel than turning the engine off, waiting for your youngsters and then restarting the engine.

I am being a bit pedantic here for a reason. WE WANT TO SAVE FUEL BUT WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO CHANGE OUR WAYS AND FOLLOW THESE RECOMMENDATIONS.

Likewise, we want to be good Christians. We want God to think our good efforts are worthy of him. Are we willing to do what it takes to follow the instructions in today's scriptures? I tell you if we do not seek forgiveness from our neighbor, from a family member, from a friend or even from a fellow Christian, we lose much more than gas mileage. WE MAY LOSE OUR FAITH. TELL ME IF IT ISN'T SO: IF PEOPLE HAVE WALKED OUT OF THIS CHURCH BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT FORGIVE WHEN THEY FELT OFFENDED? IS IT NOT TRUE THAT

## FRIENDS LEFT THIS CHURCH BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT FORGIVEN?

Not forgiving may lead us to lose more than our pride. We may lose human dignity and the very divine nature God put inside each and everyone.

The mother of Forgiveness is Radical Love. It was in writing of this love that prompted the apostle Paul to remind Roman Christians that we are to “Let love be genuine...; love one another with mutual affection; out do one another in showing honor...bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.” And later in this second reading he writes of this radical love again, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.”

No one can show you how to love in this way. Radical love is done from the heart. We are given clear guidance on how to love as Jesus did if we can apply forgiveness in our lives.

For myself, personally, I have found that when someone irritates me, the best way to engage them is by being noble. I look for the good in the situation, and I ask God to show me

the good in such a person. If someone cuts me off on the highway, I back off and think, "He needs to get there faster than I." If someone ignores what I have to say, I'll ask them to reconsider or get them to tell me what issues they have.

When I meet someone who always has to be "right" I say, "You could be right," acknowledging that what they say has value or merit. I may give that person the right of way for a time, until it hurts, until it harasses or it humiliates someone else. When this occurs, I am obligated as a Christian to take a stand for good and what is right even if it hurts me. As St. Paul tells us today, we must overcome evil with good. Yet God is the final judge.

If I am being hurt, harassed or humiliated for what I believe is right, then I will try to be gracious with my words and turn that person and my thoughts over to God. Fighting usually does little good with someone who thinks they are always right. God will be there judge.

Being noble, means being the better person, the better Christian and asking how Jesus would handle the matter. "What would Jesus do?" is a popular slogan among the church. When I do

these things, I am less angry, less apt to lose sleep and better able to live, work or worship with any difficult person I have met.

We have specific instructions on how to deal with difficult people when we encounter them in the church. They are found in the gospel today. How many people might still be with us today if one or two witnesses had gone in love to try to restore such a brother or sister who was offended?

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them,” is an often used quote of Jesus to simply say that the church is gathered wherever my name is held in honor. What we don’t know from that gathering is how long Jesus will choose to stay in such a group when the members of that group foster division and even hatred, and cease to honor the least of his brethren. One can imagine Jesus leaving church and heading for the nearest Starbucks, where people are friendlier and open to each other.

The time has come for God’s church to handle its conflicts in an orderly manner. Be noble and go to the one offended. If that doesn’t work bring a couple of impartial members to

hear the two of you. Finally if the one who needs to have a change of heart refuses to listen and change their attitude, the whole church is to be told what is going on. The idea is that public opinion works to bring attention to the need for change in that person's life. It's the same concept used when a coach penalizes the whole team when one of its players has broken a rule and no one comes forward. No one may rat on their teammate, but pressure is turned way up on the player who is making life hard on everyone else.

We are reminded in the Lord's Prayer that we ask God to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others. In this prayer what often goes unnoticed is that being forgiven is based on the measure of how we forgive others. Remember the parable of the unjust steward who paid his debt to the fullest extent of the law, when he failed to forgive a friend who owed him money.

May we take heed here in this church and be forewarned lest we lose the very right to be called the Church of Jesus Christ. Let us remember the one who forgave us each a debt that we can never repay. Amen