

"All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." (Edmund Burke)

Much of human history can be explained by Edmund Burke's observation. Time and again those who profess to be good seem to clearly outnumber those who are evil, yet those who are evil seem to prevail far too often. Seldom is it the numbers that determine the outcome, but whether those who claim to be good people are willing to speak up and stand up for what they know to be right.

The Lord commands his people to do good (Luke 6:35; Eph. 2:10). Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us and send us out to do good works" (Titus 2:14).

In the parable of the talents, Jesus described a man who did nothing. When he received his Lord's money, he "went and dug a hole, and hid his Lord's money" (Matt. 25:18). When his Lord returned, he returned to the Lord just what he had been given (Matt. 25:25). Notice, the servant did not do any outright evil, such as stealing the money, but then neither did he do anything good. He did nothing and he got nothing good accomplished. Jesus said he was a "wicked and slothful servant" (Matt. 25:26).

Jesus rebuked the church at Laodicea for doing nothing. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. (Revelation 3:15-16).

One person remarked, "Too many Christians and too many churches do nothing. They are standing idly by, they are mere spectators. They sit on the sidelines instead of actively participating and working for the good. If good wins, they join in the celebration though they did nothing to produce the victory. If evil wins, they will complain long and loud though their own apathy helped produce the undesirable result."

Historically, the people called Methodists have spoken to many social ills and been effective in turning the tide from evil to god.

Christians are called to make a difference, and in our community we have the opportunity to be "salt and light."

At their next meeting, our City Council will take up a matter which has previously been voted into city code by the citizens of Ruston. The food service company serving the La Tech campus, Aramark, has requested a change to the ordinances prohibiting alcohol sales within a narrowly defined distance of churches and schools. This change, if adopted, will give Aramark the green light to apply for a state liquor to sell alcohol on the Tech campus. It has been said that this is, specifically to offer sales and consumption of alcohol in the new \$22 million Davison Athletics Complex, but the ordinance is written to include the entire campus.

Offering liquor sales in the new Davison Athletic Complex is one step on a slippery slope – a journey from which there will be no turning back.

Two frequently-offered reasons to offer alcohol on campus are cited in a February 2015 article "Beer and Ball on Campus? The Issue of In-Stadium Alcohol Sales" by Drs. Mark Mitchell and Robert Montgomery in "Contemporary Sports Issues." Noting that beer is sold in 21 on-campus stadiums (of 128 FBS schools, or 16.4% of Division 1 football programs) they raise the issues of potential increased revenue streams and "enhancing the fan experience."

I would question whether these are valid issues and whether this leads to a desirable outcome for the community of Ruston or whether this is just the "glitter" that appears to be "gold."

First, the matter of economics.

Is this a truly well thought out business model for economic development? We need to pose the two-fold question, "Whose money will be going into the coffers and where do the profits go?" It's been said that economic development is bringing outside dollars in to the local economy. Knowing that most everyone who attends a Tech game will be local folks, we will see local dollars going primarily to outside interests and entities. Specifically, Ruston dollars will be going to a brewer, a distributor, and a food-service corporation, all of which are from beyond the bounds of Ruston and Lincoln Parish. Perhaps a small trickle will make its way to the athletic department, though I don't know this with certitude, but this is a commonly cited reason for introducing on-campus sales. The bottom line is not an attractive bottom line: local dollars will be going out, rather than coming in to our city. It's not good business.

The second matter relates more to the image, atmosphere, and culture that is uniquely ours.

Of the schools referenced above which offer in-stadium alcohol sales and consumption, four are in Louisiana (LSU, Tulane, ULL, and ULM). The SEC has a conference-wide ban on sales to the general public, limiting beer in Tiger Stadium to the private suites, Tulane plays in a public venue (the Superdome) which establishes the policy and ULL adopted a policy in 2009 which opened sales to all fans. I do not know the policy at ULM.

I've been to enough games at Tiger Stadium, the Superdome and Cajun Field to say with confidence and pride (as a resident of Ruston and a Tech alumni) that we have something special in Ruston – a family atmosphere. I would rather enjoy one game at Joe Aillet Stadium with my grandson Logan, than endure one in Baton Rouge, New

Orleans, or Lafayette. While alcohol may not be offered openly in each of those venues, the atmosphere that exists is certainly more of the "party school" atmosphere and is not welcoming to families.

The positive, unique, family-friendly atmosphere of Ruston & Tech are something we need not sacrifice to the almighty dollar or to the desires of a small minority. This dynamic, combined with the potential negative impacts of alcohol on individuals and our community should not be taken lightly.

Whatever views on alcohol are held by an individual, none would deny the devastating effects it has had in countless lives across our land. We know that drinking is not a Biblically-delineated sin (excessive or abusive use of alcohol is), however we also must be honest and admit that it is a rarity to find a household or family that has not experienced heartache brought on by alcohol.

Mitchell and Montgomery remind us, "Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) have consistently opposed any introduction of in-stadium alcohol sales given that many college-aged students are under age 21 (the legal drinking age). It is further argued that children are always watching adults for behavioral leads or cues (i.e., accepted behaviors). The organization doesn't like the implied linkage in the mind of a child. Noted MADD National President Jan Withers states, "If they see the only way to have fun is to drink a lot, then they're going to model that. That's not the message we want to be sending them." Further, it is argued, it is counter-intuitive to express institutional concerns about binge drinking among college students and then allow them to buy/consume alcohol while watching collegiate athletics."

So, on the matter of the image we cast and the culture we desire to live in one must question the potential negative impacts this change would bring (or open future doors to) for our community and our children. Allowing alcohol in the private suites takes us one step closer to consumption in the stands.

If the issue is increased revenue, I am confident that the Tech/Ruston community has the creative business resources to create a model and plan to bring dollars in, rather than send dollars out, thereby giving our people a positive, pro-active, win-win solution.

On the matter of enhancing the game-day experience of the fan, why not enhance the game-day experience of a child or grandchild or a friend or perspective student, by inviting them to a game?

The question stands before our City Council, "Is this what is best for our community?"

Rather than jumping on the bandwagon and joining those communities and schools that offer greater access to alcohol, I believe that Ruston can lead the way and show the way for others.

The easy way would to say "yes" to this variance, but the best way is rarely, if ever, the easy way. The better way is to say "no we're choosing not to go this route, because we believe there is a better way for us all to move forward together, for the good of the whole, for the good of our people."

Quoting Drs. Mitchell and Montgomery, in their summary, "Experienced leaders know that just because you are able to some something doesn't mean you are always well-advised to do so."

All that glitters truly is not gold.

Humbly and confidently,

Robert "Bob" Deich

Please contact these people below and express your concerns

The City Council votes on Monday, August 3.

Speak up. Show up. Let your voice be heard!

Mayor: Ronny Walker251-3203

Glenda Howard, Alderman

Rosalind Jones, Alderman

Jedd Lewis, Alderman

Jim Pearce, Alderman

Marie Riggs, Alderman

Dr. Les Guice, Louisiana Tech University President.....257-2000