

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, May 21st 2013

Today's scripture readings seem to be about trust and prayer. In the book of Sirach, the writer says "Trust God and God will help you; trust in him, and he will direct your way". The psalmist proclaims, "Trust in the Lord and do good". In Mark, the disciples are confused, but don't have the courage to ask Jesus what he means about the Son of Man being handed over to men (I'll bet a child would ask). And Jesus takes a child, places it in their midst and says, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me".

Trust. And trust like a child. Easy to say. Hard to do.

I understand where the disciples are coming from. No one wants to look like a fool. Especially in front of their teacher and friends. I've taught all age groups and one of the things I love about teaching younger children is that they are not afraid to ask a question. Any question. The notion that they might look foolish doesn't enter their mind. As they age, they become much more concerned about what others think. The prayer of a child is pure. So clean and honest. I want the heart of a child, not this crusty, old one I seem to have. I wish we could all be like young children. Willing to trust and not worrying so much about what others think. Unashamed to pray for anything.

My granddaughter, Annie, is at an adorable age. She loves her daddy. She wants to see him all the time. When he is in her line of sight, she is smiling and happy. When he leaves her line of sight, she is unhappy. My son, Trevor, picks Annie up and (much to the chagrin of her grandmother) tosses her into the air and catches her. Annie loves it. She laughs and laughs and focuses completely on her dad. The notion that he might drop her never even enters her mind. She loves and trusts him.

Why do we pray? Show me one shred of hard evidence that prayer really works. Yet we pray. Sometimes people don't pray because they think that God is mad at them. If you want to know how God feels about you, look at Jesus.

Several months ago we lost my dad to cancer. At the moment my dad died there were several of us in the room and the reactions were varied. Some cried. I watched his face and held his hand (which is strange as I cry easily). My wife prayed and held my mom. I so admire my wife. What a huge heart she has. Her capacity for love and compassion is incredible. Looking back, I wish my reaction had been like hers. All of us are given hearts by God. Why do some of us have huge hearts with powerful

love and others (aka me) do not? How do we develop our hearts? How do we develop our gifts from God? Scripture and prayer. Even when it seems like we are just going through the motions. Earnest repentance and an honest relationship with God. These are things we have to work at. A powerful heart does not just happen. It requires exercise. Even when the exercise seems boring and fruitless.

My prayer today is for those of us whose prayer life is suffering and whose hearts are in need of some exercise.

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