

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Rev. J.D. McQueen, II - All Saints' Episcopal Church, San Diego, CA

As we imagine Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus while her sister Martha bustles around the house, waiting on Jesus and her other guests, we might be reminded of the old expression of someone who is “so heavenly-minded that they’re no earthly-good.”

- ❖ It’s vital that we understand why that’s *not* the case because this is a sentiment that is rapidly spreading through our culture.
- ❖ There’s evidence of this all over, and it’s becoming especially obvious in the aftermath of mass shootings.
- ❖ Inevitably a public official will say that they’re praying for the victims and their families, to which a growing number will furiously respond that they need to stop “praying” and *do* something – and, to a certain extent, they’re both right.

Something the Bible makes very clear is that we *must* pray.

- ❖ Prayer is our connection to Jesus and we can’t do anything without him.
- ❖ But while prayer is a good and proper response to life, it cannot be our *only* response.

In his letter, James writes explicitly that faith without any *action* is *dead*, and we can instinctively *sense* that that’s *true*.

- ❖ Why? That’s how relationships *work* – you *have* to love in *both* word *and* action.
- ❖ Throughout *all* of Scripture, no one leaves an encounter with God *unchanged*.
- ❖ Their lives *always* take on new *meaning* and *purpose*, because whenever *God* blesses someone, it’s so that they *themselves* can *be* a blessing.

July 17, 2016

We experience this at the end of every *Mass*.

- ❖ The Post-communion prayer ends with us asking God for the grace to stay in fellowship with him and our neighbor, *and to do all such good works that he's prepared for us to walk in.*
- ❖ We hear this in the dismissals too; "Go in peace to *love and serve the Lord*"; "let us bless the *Lord*".
- ❖ *We're* blessed to *be* a blessing.
- ❖ The *more* prayerful we *become*, the *more* we find ourselves *led* to *some* kind of loving *action*.

Martha and Mary are showing that what *leads* us to act makes all the difference.

- ❖ Martha's like the football player that drops an easy pass because he was heading upfield before he got it.
- ❖ She wants to *act*, but she hasn't really *gotten* it yet, so instead of *accomplishing God's purposes*, she's being *consumed* by her *own*.
- ❖ We can't serve with peace and confidence if we don't know the Lord, and we see that in Martha being distracted, anxious, and troubled about many things.
- ❖ Jesus himself is the one needful thing because as much as he loves to be served, he prefers to be loved.

We see this at the Last Supper, where Jesus tells the disciples that he no longer calls them servants but friends.

- ❖ He says this because when we love someone we become like them.
- ❖ We begin to see the world the same way; we begin to have the same desires and responses to it.
- ❖ When we love what God loves and are wounded by what breaks his heart, we'll want to do what he does.
- ❖ God himself could not sit on the sidelines and so, as we become like him, he cherishes our dignity by giving us a role to play.

July 17, 2016

That's how Jesus wants to be served.

- ❖ He wants us our love of him to make us more passionate about loving the people in front of us.
- ❖ He wants us to receive more of him so that we'll be freer to give them what they need, instead of just what we ourselves have to offer.

Think about the tangible ways that you're choosing the good portion on a daily basis.

- ❖ Are you spending enough time with Jesus to become like him?
- ❖ Is your heart still and open enough to receive his blessing?
- ❖ Are you attentive and generous enough to allow yourself to be sent?

As Christians, we can and should be doing a lot of "earthly good," but we have to be "heavenly-minded" first.

July 17, 2016