

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, May 21st 2016

Prayer and healing. These are the two main themes that emerge from today's first reading from James. Are you suffering? Pray. Are you cheerful? Pray. Are you sick? Pray. This is what we are told.

This is easier said than done, though, isn't it? I am a busy person, just like everyone else is these days in our fast-paced and constantly-connected society. Setting aside the time and brain bandwidth for prayer often gets pushed down the priority list pretty quickly and easily. Besides the simple challenges of time, it is also often hard for me to see what effect prayer actually has in my life. It doesn't automatically change my mood from bad to good. It doesn't make my coughing and sneezing go away when I have a cold. It doesn't change the fact that I really don't want to go to the next meeting on my schedule. James, however, invites us to a deeper level in our exploration of and commitment to prayer.

Here we come to the idea of healing. One definition of that word is "to make whole." If prayer leads to my life being made whole, that means I have to trust that my prayer is working some kind of good in me. I may not know what it is and I may not readily see it, but if I trust that God is active in the world (as we must if we are to call ourselves people of faith), then I can call myself to prayer with a spirit of hope and belief that I am being changed through my prayer. I am being healed and made whole, growing into the person God desires me to be, even if the problems of my life do not go away.

This is where today's Gospel comes into play. We are asked to exercise this trust in a child-like way. I suppose you could say that children trust because they are naive. Ideally, children don't learn life's hard lessons of disappointment and failure and grief when they are young. Adults don't have that luxury, though, so we are not asked to be like children in a naive way, believing that our trust in God will remove all suffering and difficulty in our lives. Instead, we are invited to trust **DESPITE** all that life has held, to trust that God is working something good in me, in the midst of all the joys and sorrows, triumphs and trials. When I am in the midst of a busy day or a challenging time in life, this simple message and simple trust that God is working for good is the little nudge that I need to spend a little time in prayer, opening myself up to this mystery as it slowly unfolds.

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