

Pass It On/Pay It Forward/Faith and Works

Fellow Pilgrims:

As Christians, we are commanded to go into the world and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 16-20). We are to pass on the Gospel message, which could be stated as: Love God with everything we have; love your neighbor as yourself; and love one another as Christ loved us. Christ loved us enough to die for us and for our sins (See March's article on sin). This love is not just an act of the will and intellect, but must be translated into concrete action. Easter is the prime example of how much God loves us in concrete terms (John 3: 16-21). As an example of how we are to love concretely, you need to read Matthew 25: 31-46 for the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. People were hungry and we fed them, thirsty and we gave them drink, naked and we clothed them, sick and we looked after them, and in prison and we visited them. These are concrete actions that every one of us can do. We pass it, The Gospel, on in concrete terms. In secular terms, we are paying it forward.

James (probably the brother of Jesus) asks and answers a fundamental question, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if a man claims to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such faith save you? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him or her, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." (James 2: 14-19) It is clear; we are to have faith and works. Works are the visible and concrete outworking of our faith. Both works without faith and faith without works are dead and are not a living faith in Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Savior.

I want to share a prayer written by Malcolm Boyd, *A Prayer of Discipleship*, from *Are You Running With Me, Jesus?* which illustrates where our faith can show forth in works both big and small, but equally valuable: "'Send me.' But where, Lord? To do what? To bring pardon where there had been injury in a life I casually brush against at my daily work? (But I had thought of mediating a teenage gang war in Chicago!) To help turn doubt into faith in a person with whom I live intimately in my circle of family or friends? (But I had thought of helping a tired drunk on skid row!) To bring joy into a life, consumed by sadness, which touches the hem of my life at a drinking fountain? (But I had thought only of a far-off mission land!) 'Send me.' Send me next door, into the next room, to speak somehow to a human heart beating alongside mine. Send me to bear a note of dignity into a subhuman, hopeless situation. Send me to show forth joy in a moment and a place where there is otherwise no joy but only the will to die. Send me to reflect your light in the darkness of futility, mere existence, and the horror of casual human cruelty. But give me Your light, too, Lord, in my own darkness and need."

Go forth into your personal world, where you are already known, and be salt and light to them (Matthew 5: 13-16). Take chances by offering to help people and give them the gift

of your presence, your actions, and your willingness to listen. I want to end with two blessings you can live out in your faith and works in the midst of the world along with a prayer. “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13: 14) and “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6: 24-26) (See my February article about Biblical Peace). My prayer for you is borrowed from Lois Cheney’s *God is No Fool*. “Today, for what I am that I ought not to be, forgive me. For what I am not that I ought to be, forgive me. Be with my mouth in what it speaks. Be with my hands in what they do. Be with my mind in what it thinks. Be with my heart in what it feels. Work in me, through me, for me, in spite of me.” Amen.

In Christ’s love,
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