

I have a prayer that I have recently discovered that I love. It is kind of ridiculous that I have just discovered it since it is printed on the inside back page of every Forward Day By Day devotional. This is it.

For Today: O God:

Give me strength to live another day;

Let me not turn coward before its difficulties or prove recreant to its duties;

Let me not lose faith in other people;

Keep me sweet and sound of heart, in spite of ingratitude, treachery, or meanness;

Preserve me from minding little stings or giving them;

Help me to keep my heart clean, and to live so honestly and fearlessly that no outward failure can dishearten me or take away the joy of conscious integrity;

Open wide the eyes of my soul that I may see good in all things;

Grant me this day some new vision of thy truth;

Inspire me with the spirit of joy and gladness;

and make me the cup of strength to suffering souls;

in the name of the strong Deliverer, our only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I love this prayer because it describes the life I want to live every day. It reminds me of what following Christ looks like. This is the way I long to live and so to have it put so wonderfully in words that I can use to start my day is very attractive to me.

A few favorite lines

- Let me not lose faith in other people
- Open wide the eyes of my soul that I may see good in all things;
- Inspire me with the spirit of joy and gladness;

For me this prayer describes how wonderful life with God is. I'll come back to the prayer, but now let us turn to our gospel reading.

We have another parable about the kingdom of God and it is one of my favorites because it is so counter cultural. As someone said at our Tuesday Evening worship discussion, this situation wouldn't fly today and it didn't fly back then. A vineyard owner goes out to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. He hires them throughout the day early morning, late morning, midday and even as late as one hour before the end of the day. When it is time to get paid he gives them all a day's wages. The ones in the morning grumble. We worked all day and we get the same as those who worked an hour.

Has this happened at your workplace? Have you ever found out that those who do the same work as you or who don't work as hard as you do get paid more? It is unfair. It's upsetting. We have an innate sense of fairness that this parable violates. I remember the time when I was preaching on this gospel at the church of the Epiphany in DC which

served breakfast to 200 homeless on Sunday mornings. I asked what would happen if we started by calling #200 instead of #1 to come to breakfast. Most of the people waiting for breakfast were in the service and some thought I meant it. All of a sudden there was the sound of great grumbling and I had to reassure them quickly that it was just a sermon illustration.

Jesus's story is not fair and it is not fair because this is about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of God is very different from how this world works. In the kingdom of God, you are welcomed whenever you show up – at the beginning of the day, in the middle of the day or at the last hour. As someone else said at the Tuesday evening sermon, in the kingdom of God when someone shows up at the last minute, the response is – Thank God you are here! This is what we try to practice in our faith communities especially as we welcome those who have just joined us. It can be challenging but if we are trying to get closer to the kingdom of God, it is what Jesus calls us to do.

However, I have a question for you, if we as followers of Christ, and know that we can show up at the last hour and be welcomed into the kingdom of God, then why are we working so hard now to follow Christ, to pray, to worship, to study scripture, to be in community with other Christians, to help those in need and to fight for justice? Why not just wait?

We live this life of following Christ because life with God is good. Life with God will fill us up and satisfy us in a way that nothing else can. We are given strength for the journey in the worst of times and know God will never leave us. We proclaim hope and we find ways to make things better in this world

And that is what I hear in the prayer that I started with. I hear what it is like to live in relationship with God day in and day out. I hear a way of life that I want to live. I will end with the prayer and let it speak for itself. The prayer is at the end of your bulletin you would like to use it. This is what it is like to live in the Kingdom of God which is always ready and waiting for us.

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