

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
March 24, 2019
The Reverend Rick Veit

God expects us to act, to be alive in our faith. Repent. Turn from our ways. Turn to the way of love. If we worship God and do not take care of God's creation and all people, then we are not being faithful.

Last week I talked about the 50 people murdered in ChristChurch, New Zealand. We had a moment of silence as we remembered all the Muslims who were innocently slaughtered within the two mosques. I spoke about how our youth group continues to pray for the specific shooting incidents, for the victims and perpetrators, in New Zealand, Norway, South Carolina, Las Vegas, Florida, the list goes on and on.

After the service, I was approached by a few of you who were feeling a bit helpless in the midst of the recurring tragedies that keep happening throughout the world. Are thoughts and prayers enough?

One recent article stated:

The headlines, alerts and tweets appeared on my screen — again. Another school shooting. The 30th U.S. mass shooting this year alone. And it's only February.

Not long after the first alerts came the offerings of thoughts and prayers. And for too many people the offering of "thoughts and prayers" means little. It's checking a box as though the offerer is absolved from further action or duty.

At some point, we become like the man turning down the help of those who came to his aid as the flood waters rose.

"The Lord will save me," the man said as the water rose above his knees, his chest, and then his head. After the man died, he asked God: "Where were you? Why didn't you save me?"

God replied, "I sent you a bus, a boat and a helicopter."

Prayer is important. But as people of faith, we are called to be in an active relationship with each other and with God.

Are thoughts and prayers enough? I think not. As Jesus taught us in the Bible today, it is time to repent, to turn from our inactivity and begin to put action into loving people throughout the world, and loving ourselves. We are here each week worshipping the Lord. But are we taking our faith out into the world?

To those who are feeling helpless, if you are not called to inspire a mass movement of love, then start simple. Love or help one person in need....one person. Start with one.

I shared last week how I was driving through the parking lot at Walmart and was passing a person who was holding up a “Help Needed” sign. I wanted to give him a dollar. But all I had was a five-dollar bill, and so I drove on. *Five dollars - No way. It is too much money.* I was only going to give him a dollar. I thought about turning around as I passed him. Instead, I drove on. *I am sure he will be fine. Someone else will take care of him.* Or...was I the one who was supposed to take care of him? Was I the one called by God to help? What if I was the only one called by God to help that man? Oh, and by the way, this was just before the mass snow storm. Maybe he would be okay though. Maybe he received a meal from someone or a five-dollar bill. Or maybe not. Maybe he received nothing, just before the sub-freezing temperatures.

It is time to repent from our ways and become active in our faith, beyond worship. How are we being active?

I have to admit, as I was preparing this sermon, I was still feeling guilty about that episode. So, just yesterday, Saturday afternoon, I decided to gather up the change I had at home. I collected five dollars worth of quarters. Our daughters, Elaina and Lucy, and I got in the car and headed back to Walmart to find that man. And....he wasn't there. We drove and drove, but could not find him. We drove through the Sam's Club parking lot, the Good Will lot. Finally, we decided to drive down toward the COMEA Shelter and see if anyone needed help. We passed by a young couple walking towards the shelter. We turned around and met them in a parking lot. They looked pretty scruffy. It was a total judgement on my part. I asked if they were headed to dinner. They replied in the affirmative. I told them I had some extra money and wondered if they could use the help. They gladly took the five dollars in change, thanked us, and continued on their way to dinner at the shelter.

Now I realize what you may be thinking: *Pastor, is this about you or is this about helping people in need?* To which my response is, “yes.” It was my repentance. And, of course, thanks to Elaina and Lucy for assisting me with my Lenten penance. Now pray for me, that my Lenten penance becomes my life practice.

Jesus taught us that unless we repent, we will all perish. We turn from *our* ways and begin to follow the ways of the LORD. Jesus' point was that all people do wrong and sin, and therefore all people are in need of repentance. Fortunately, the fig tree parable that he told reminded us of the grace and forgiveness of the LORD when we are not faithful.

A man plants a fig tree in his vineyard. The man is God. He realizes after about three years that the tree is not being cared for and therefore is not producing any fruit. He asks the gardener, who is supposed to be the Messiah, to cut down the tree. But the gardener pleads with the owner. Jesus intercedes, and the man gives the people another chance to be faithful, to care for the tree, to care for the world. If there is then no response, then cut it down! In other words, the end is near. It is a call for all of us to repent and begin living the life God calls us to live, taking care of the poor, taking care of anyone in need, fertilizing the tree.

Who are those people that God has placed before us? Do not wait. Make it simple. Help one person at a time with even one simple act of kindness.

A few thousand years before Jesus, God approached Moses. God heard the call and the suffering of the people. The people of Israel were in dire need. They were dying and being abused under the oppressive hand of the Egyptian government. They needed help, and God called out to a man named Moses. He approached him with a message:

“I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” And Moses immediately responded, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” Modern day translation: “You have a five-dollar bill in your wallet. Now back the car up and help the man who is in need of your help.” The devil won the battle that day and the man did not receive what God had inspired me to give him. The consequences of my sin were great, and I have to live with that. Fortunately, our God loves us and forgives us. Eventually, God won the battle, and a young couple was blessed with five dollars in quarters.

After questioning God, God said to Moses, “I will be with you.” God would give Moses the strength and the know-how to accomplish a great task.

A side note: But can you imagine the consequences if Moses had not been faithful? Well, we can imagine: It was called World War II, when six million Jewish people, and people who were mentally and physically handicapped, and people who were gay, were innocently slaughtered.

And so, even though Moses questioned God’s direction, he repented, turned from his reluctance to help, and followed God’s Word. And an entire nation of people were saved.

You do not have to be Moses. Start with one. Do one act of kindness. Then, once you are successful, do another and then do some more. Love God. Love your neighbor as you would yourself. And maybe that one person that you help may decide not to enter a mosque and murder fifty people. Why? Because they experienced God’s love personally through you.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
March 24, 2019
The Reverend Rick Veit

God expects us to act, to be alive in our faith. Repent. Turn from our ways. Turn to the way of love. If we worship God and do not take care of God's creation and all people, then we are not being faithful.

Last week I talked about the 50 people murdered in ChristChurch, New Zealand. We had a moment of silence as we remembered all the Muslims who were innocently slaughtered within the two mosques. I spoke about how our youth group continues to pray for the specific shooting incidents, for the victims and perpetrators, in New Zealand, Norway, South Carolina, Las Vegas, Florida, the list goes on and on.

After the service, I was approached by a few of you who were feeling a bit helpless in the midst of the recurring tragedies that keep happening throughout the world. Are thoughts and prayers enough?

One recent article stated:

The headlines, alerts and tweets appeared on my screen — again. Another school shooting. The 30th U.S. mass shooting this year alone. And it's only February.

Not long after the first alerts came the offerings of thoughts and prayers. And for too many people the offering of "thoughts and prayers" means little. It's checking a box as though the offerer is absolved from further action or duty.

At some point, we become like the man turning down the help of those who came to his aid as the flood waters rose.

"The Lord will save me," the man said as the water rose above his knees, his chest, and then his head. After the man died, he asked God: "Where were you? Why didn't you save me?"

God replied, "I sent you a bus, a boat and a helicopter."

Prayer is important. But as people of faith, we are called to be in an active relationship with each other and with God.

Are thoughts and prayers enough? I think not. As Jesus taught us in the Bible today, it is time to repent, to turn from our inactivity and begin to put action into loving people throughout the world, and loving ourselves. We are here each week worshipping the Lord. But are we taking our faith out into the world?

To those who are feeling helpless, if you are not called to inspire a mass movement of love, then start simple. Love or help one person in need....one person. Start with one.

I shared last week how I was driving through the parking lot at Walmart and was passing a person who was holding up a “Help Needed” sign. I wanted to give him a dollar. But all I had was a five-dollar bill, and so I drove on. *Five dollars - No way. It is too much money.* I was only going to give him a dollar. I thought about turning around as I passed him. Instead, I drove on. *I am sure he will be fine. Someone else will take care of him.* Or...was I the one who was supposed to take care of him? Was I the one called by God to help? What if I was the only one called by God to help that man? Oh, and by the way, this was just before the mass snow storm. Maybe he would be okay though. Maybe he received a meal from someone or a five-dollar bill. Or maybe not. Maybe he received nothing, just before the sub-freezing temperatures.

It is time to repent from our ways and become active in our faith, beyond worship. How are we being active?

I have to admit, as I was preparing this sermon, I was still feeling guilty about that episode. So, just yesterday, Saturday afternoon, I decided to gather up the change I had at home. I collected five dollars worth of quarters. Our daughters, Elaina and Lucy, and I got in the car and headed back to Walmart to find that man. And....he wasn't there. We drove and drove, but could not find him. We drove through the Sam's Club parking lot, the Good Will lot. Finally, we decided to drive down toward the COMEA Shelter and see if anyone needed help. We passed by a young couple walking towards the shelter. We turned around and met them in a parking lot. They looked pretty scruffy. It was a total judgement on my part. I asked if they were headed to dinner. They replied in the affirmative. I told them I had some extra money and wondered if they could use the help. They gladly took the five dollars in change, thanked us, and continued on their way to dinner at the shelter.

Now I realize what you may be thinking: *Pastor, is this about you or is this about helping people in need?* To which my response is, “yes.” It was my repentance. And, of course, thanks to Elaina and Lucy for assisting me with my Lenten penance. Now pray for me, that my Lenten penance becomes my life practice.

Jesus taught us that unless we repent, we will all perish. We turn from *our* ways and begin to follow the ways of the LORD. Jesus' point was that all people do wrong and sin, and therefore all people are in need of repentance. Fortunately, the fig tree parable that he told reminded us of the grace and forgiveness of the LORD when we are not faithful.

A man plants a fig tree in his vineyard. The man is God. He realizes after about three years that the tree is not being cared for and therefore is not producing any fruit. He asks the gardener, who is supposed to be the Messiah, to cut down the tree. But the gardener pleads with the owner. Jesus intercedes, and the man gives the people another chance to be faithful, to care for the tree, to care for the world. If there is then no response, then cut it down! In other words, the end is near. It is a call for all of us to repent and begin living the life God calls us to live, taking care of the poor, taking care of anyone in need, fertilizing the tree.

Who are those people that God has placed before us? Do not wait. Make it simple. Help one person at a time with even one simple act of kindness.

A few thousand years before Jesus, God approached Moses. God heard the call and the suffering of the people. The people of Israel were in dire need. They were dying and being abused under the oppressive hand of the Egyptian government. They needed help, and God called out to a man named Moses. He approached him with a message:

“I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” And Moses immediately responded, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” Modern day translation: “You have a five-dollar bill in your wallet. Now back the car up and help the man who is in need of your help.” The devil won the battle that day and the man did not receive what God had inspired me to give him. The consequences of my sin were great, and I have to live with that. Fortunately, our God loves us and forgives us. Eventually, God won the battle, and a young couple was blessed with five dollars in quarters.

After questioning God, God said to Moses, “I will be with you.” God would give Moses the strength and the know-how to accomplish a great task.

A side note: But can you imagine the consequences if Moses had not been faithful? Well, we can imagine: It was called World War II, when six million Jewish people, and people who were mentally and physically handicapped, and people who were gay, were innocently slaughtered.

And so, even though Moses questioned God’s direction, he repented, turned from his reluctance to help, and followed God’s Word. And an entire nation of people were saved.

You do not have to be Moses. Start with one. Do one act of kindness. Then, once you are successful, do another and then do some more. Love God. Love your neighbor as you would yourself. And maybe that one person that you help may decide not to enter a mosque and murder fifty people. Why? Because they experienced God’s love personally through you.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
March 24, 2019
The Reverend Rick Veit

God expects us to act, to be alive in our faith. Repent. Turn from our ways. Turn to the way of love. If we worship God and do not take care of God's creation and all people, then we are not being faithful.

Last week I talked about the 50 people murdered in ChristChurch, New Zealand. We had a moment of silence as we remembered all the Muslims who were innocently slaughtered within the two mosques. I spoke about how our youth group continues to pray for the specific shooting incidents, for the victims and perpetrators, in New Zealand, Norway, South Carolina, Las Vegas, Florida, the list goes on and on.

After the service, I was approached by a few of you who were feeling a bit helpless in the midst of the recurring tragedies that keep happening throughout the world. Are thoughts and prayers enough?

One recent article stated:

The headlines, alerts and tweets appeared on my screen — again. Another school shooting. The 30th U.S. mass shooting this year alone. And it's only February.

Not long after the first alerts came the offerings of thoughts and prayers. And for too many people the offering of "thoughts and prayers" means little. It's checking a box as though the offerer is absolved from further action or duty.

At some point, we become like the man turning down the help of those who came to his aid as the flood waters rose.

"The Lord will save me," the man said as the water rose above his knees, his chest, and then his head. After the man died, he asked God: "Where were you? Why didn't you save me?"

God replied, "I sent you a bus, a boat and a helicopter."

Prayer is important. But as people of faith, we are called to be in an active relationship with each other and with God.

Are thoughts and prayers enough? I think not. As Jesus taught us in the Bible today, it is time to repent, to turn from our inactivity and begin to put action into loving people throughout the world, and loving ourselves. We are here each week worshipping the Lord. But are we taking our faith out into the world?

To those who are feeling helpless, if you are not called to inspire a mass movement of love, then start simple. Love or help one person in need....one person. Start with one.

I shared last week how I was driving through the parking lot at Walmart and was passing a person who was holding up a “Help Needed” sign. I wanted to give him a dollar. But all I had was a five-dollar bill, and so I drove on. *Five dollars - No way. It is too much money.* I was only going to give him a dollar. I thought about turning around as I passed him. Instead, I drove on. *I am sure he will be fine. Someone else will take care of him.* Or...was I the one who was supposed to take care of him? Was I the one called by God to help? What if I was the only one called by God to help that man? Oh, and by the way, this was just before the mass snow storm. Maybe he would be okay though. Maybe he received a meal from someone or a five-dollar bill. Or maybe not. Maybe he received nothing, just before the sub-freezing temperatures.

It is time to repent from our ways and become active in our faith, beyond worship. How are we being active?

I have to admit, as I was preparing this sermon, I was still feeling guilty about that episode. So, just yesterday, Saturday afternoon, I decided to gather up the change I had at home. I collected five dollars worth of quarters. Our daughters, Elaina and Lucy, and I got in the car and headed back to Walmart to find that man. And....he wasn't there. We drove and drove, but could not find him. We drove through the Sam's Club parking lot, the Good Will lot. Finally, we decided to drive down toward the COMEA Shelter and see if anyone needed help. We passed by a young couple walking towards the shelter. We turned around and met them in a parking lot. They looked pretty scruffy. It was a total judgement on my part. I asked if they were headed to dinner. They replied in the affirmative. I told them I had some extra money and wondered if they could use the help. They gladly took the five dollars in change, thanked us, and continued on their way to dinner at the shelter.

Now I realize what you may be thinking: *Pastor, is this about you or is this about helping people in need?* To which my response is, “yes.” It was my repentance. And, of course, thanks to Elaina and Lucy for assisting me with my Lenten penance. Now pray for me, that my Lenten penance becomes my life practice.

Jesus taught us that unless we repent, we will all perish. We turn from *our* ways and begin to follow the ways of the LORD. Jesus' point was that all people do wrong and sin, and therefore all people are in need of repentance. Fortunately, the fig tree parable that he told reminded us of the grace and forgiveness of the LORD when we are not faithful.

A man plants a fig tree in his vineyard. The man is God. He realizes after about three years that the tree is not being cared for and therefore is not producing any fruit. He asks the gardener, who is supposed to be the Messiah, to cut down the tree. But the gardener pleads with the owner. Jesus intercedes, and the man gives the people another chance to be faithful, to care for the tree, to care for the world. If there is then no response, then cut it down! In other words, the end is near. It is a call for all of us to repent and begin living the life God calls us to live, taking care of the poor, taking care of anyone in need, fertilizing the tree.

Who are those people that God has placed before us? Do not wait. Make it simple. Help one person at a time with even one simple act of kindness.

A few thousand years before Jesus, God approached Moses. God heard the call and the suffering of the people. The people of Israel were in dire need. They were dying and being abused under the oppressive hand of the Egyptian government. They needed help, and God called out to a man named Moses. He approached him with a message:

“I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” And Moses immediately responded, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” Modern day translation: “You have a five-dollar bill in your wallet. Now back the car up and help the man who is in need of your help.” The devil won the battle that day and the man did not receive what God had inspired me to give him. The consequences of my sin were great, and I have to live with that. Fortunately, our God loves us and forgives us. Eventually, God won the battle, and a young couple was blessed with five dollars in quarters.

After questioning God, God said to Moses, “I will be with you.” God would give Moses the strength and the know-how to accomplish a great task.

A side note: But can you imagine the consequences if Moses had not been faithful? Well, we can imagine: It was called World War II, when six million Jewish people, and people who were mentally and physically handicapped, and people who were gay, were innocently slaughtered.

And so, even though Moses questioned God’s direction, he repented, turned from his reluctance to help, and followed God’s Word. And an entire nation of people were saved.

You do not have to be Moses. Start with one. Do one act of kindness. Then, once you are successful, do another and then do some more. Love God. Love your neighbor as you would yourself. And maybe that one person that you help may decide not to enter a mosque and murder fifty people. Why? Because they experienced God’s love personally through you.