

Tuesday, November 7, 2017 - Day 310 – Hosea 13-14, Psalm 104, Matt 6

Don't Be Like Those Hypocrites!

(Unless you're working for applause.)

In Matthew chapter six, our Lord is scolding the church leaders...again. He calls them hypocrites and uses them as the bad example.

Those who were listening to Jesus probably would have understood this to sound like...*they are just acting, putting on a show for others.*

Jesus is telling us not to pray as if we are putting on a show for other people because if we do the applause that we might get is the only good that will come of it.

We have all heard these prayers, and if we lowly humans can discern that the prayers are meant to demonstrate our immense holiness to the rest of the congregation, the surely God in heaven discerns it also.

When we give, when we fast, and when we pray, we are to take it quietly and privately to the Lord. That is where the reward is, it says. What reward? What do we get out of the deal? We get intimacy; almost as though it is a secret between two friends. It is a conversation with your most trusted friend, and you never have to say, "And don't tell anybody."

It is within that framework that we may find ourselves without any words at all, or maybe not the right words. It is then that we can honestly say, "You know God, I really don't know how to talk to you. Teach me."

And he does and it is far more simple than we imagined. It is basic and relaxed and we don't have to worry ourselves with projecting our voice across the square or making dramatic gestures with our arms.

In the privacy of the little closet, where it is just He and Thee, we are encouraged to only worry about bread for today. Not a loaf for today, and one for tomorrow and one more for the freezer. Just enough for today, we'll take care of tomorrow when it gets here.

We learn that all of those grudges we hold, all the slights and injustices that we refuse to forgive, are only blocking our own sins from being wiped away.

I don't understand Jesus to be telling us not to pray in public, or in community worship.

I understand that I am being invited to have a private audience, and that when I set aside the time and the place, when I close the door behind me...that He is already waiting.

By The Rev. Dennis Coleman