

“One thing is needful”

It comes at the exact mid-point of what has been known by Anglicans as the Trinity Season – the famous parable of the so-called Good Samaritan, the Gospel for the 13th Sunday after Trinity. It is, of course, not entirely the case that the Trinity Season always runs to twenty-six Sundays, but it can and does on occasion. My point is that generally speaking this familiar Gospel parable marks a mid-way point and concentrates for us an important spiritual and theological theme; namely the intercourse between thought and action, between active and contemplative life. In short, it speaks to a certain feature of Christian faith and life, the idea of the *vita mixta*, our thinking and our acting.



Anchor Events:

Michaelmas Choral Evensong at Christ Church,
Windsor, on Sunday, October 4th, 2015, at 4:00pm;

Choral Evensong at St. Peter's Cathedral,
Charlottetown on Sunday, November 1st, 2015, at
4:00pm;

Choral Evensong at St. George's, Halifax, on
Sunday, January 31st, 2016 at 4:00pm;

Lenten Quiet Day on Saturday, March 12th, 2016,
9:00am-4:00pm at King's-Edgehill School,
Windsor.

simply a strategy to increase productivity, to get the most out of the human robot. No wonder Google promotes it.

Contemplation is not the servant of action. Quite the other way around. The whole point of the parable of the Good Samaritan is not simply about “go and do thou likewise” but about “*who is my neighbour?*”, a question which arises out of the deeper question about how you read – think – the law, about our relation to God. How you read – understand – is what matters most. The parable, I contend, emphasizes the very opposite of what contemporary Christianity and the social and therapeutic culture which is its creation most insists, namely the priority of action over contemplation. The parable insists that how you read, how you think, is entirely primary.

We are called to thought and action, to prayer and service. Where then does the Prayer Book Society fit in? To remind us of the focused and central nature of that interplay of prayer and service that belongs to the pattern of spirituality in the classical Books of Common Prayer. That interconnection has become sadly divorced in our contemporary culture. In educational circles, at best there is a moment of mindfulness tacked on to the end of a class. Lovely. But the moment is really only about reflecting on what you have been doing – that remains primary. Mindfulness is

That and that alone governs and determines your action. The parable has the confidence of thought to show this against the cynicism and despair of our culture. You can't go and do likewise without thinking about God and Man, without thinking about the succinct concretion of the unity of God and Man.

For Christians that coming together, that concretion, is the Incarnation. The wonder and the marvel of the Trinity Season is that it shows us, Sunday after Sunday, the way in which our actions mirror our reflections; our spiritual and intellectual identity in Christ shapes our actions. It is in this sense and only in this sense that we participate in the Logos of God, in Christ the Word and Son of the Father.

Nowhere is this more fully worked out than in the Eucharistic lectionary that belongs to the essential Catholicism of western Christianity embodied for Anglicans in the readings for Holy Communion in the Book of Common Prayer. It is there for us to reclaim and own not just for ourselves but for the glory of God and the good of his Church and people.

Perhaps nowhere is the interplay between thought and action, between the active and contemplative better expressed than in Aelred of Rievaulx's marvellous meditation on the story of Martha and Mary, the story which follows immediately upon Luke's parable of the Good Samaritan.

In this wretched and laborious life, brethren, Martha must of necessity be in our house; that is to say, our soul has to be concerned with bodily actions. As long as we need to eat and drink, we shall need to tame our flesh with watching, fasting, and work. This is Martha's role. But in our souls there ought also to be Mary, that is, spiritual activity. For we should not always give ourselves to bodily efforts, but sometimes be still and see how lovely, how sweet the Lord is, sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing his word. You should in no wise neglect Mary for Martha; or again Martha for Mary. For, if you neglect Martha, who will feed Jesus? If you neglect Mary, what use is it for Jesus to come to your house, when you taste nothing of his sweetness?

Nothing speaks so directly and profoundly to our contemporary concerns and worries than such twelfth century wisdom. Ponder it and marvel. Learn and live.

We embark upon another season of anchor events. The activities of the Prayer Book Society of NS/PEI include the following: a Michaelmas Choral Evensong at Christ Church, Windsor, on Sunday, October 4th, 2015, at 4:00pm; a Choral Evensong at St. Peter's Cathedral, Charlottetown on Sunday, November 1st, 2015, at 4:00pm; a Choral Evensong at St. George's, Halifax, on Sunday, January 31st, 2016 at 4:00pm; and a Lenten Quiet Day on Saturday, March 12th, 2016, 9:00am-4:00pm at King's-Edgehill School, Windsor. For information contact currydp@gmail.com or 1-902-790-6173 or see the website.

(Rev'd) David Curry
President
PBSC NS PEI

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