

Nourishment for the Journey

Ruminations on Matthew 5.1-12

"In our culture, some regard themselves as religious while a growing number regard themselves as spiritual. Micah 6.8, Psalm 15, and Matthew 5.1-12 make it clear that thinking ourselves as good for either of these reasons is not sufficient in God's eyes.

Being religious or spiritual is empty of any praiseworthy acknowledgment from God unless it is accompanied by being ethical. Some say we should be prayerful; God says to be just. Some say we should read our Bibles; God says be kind to all. Some say we should be meditative and introspective; God says walk humbly with God and God's creation.

Those who live with God in their lives are those who focus on being good people – i.e., behaving in ethical and moral ways towards others. God lives with us when we tell the truth, and do it in a way that is compassionate and gentle...when slander never passes our lips...when we never intend harm toward anyone...when we never are vindictive nor even accusatory, but when we revere those who revere God, and when we are willing to hurt our own social or physical well-being rather than do any harm to our moral well-being.

God is made manifest in us when we put character first and foremost in our lives. The Beatitudes spell this out as much as Micah 6 and Psalm 15. We are blessed for being people of good character, not for all the other things others may aspire toward. It is clear in these blessings that being a person of ethical integrity and spiritual purity is to be preferred over all of the other collective benefits that this world has to offer.

Is this what we practice in our daily lives? Does our faith change the way we live in this world? Does it make us different from those who would rather do whatever it takes to get ahead or to win? Would we feel blessed if justice, kindness, and being humble were our priorities? Would we feel blessed if being good and doing the right thing resulted in criticism, disdain, hatred, and persecution from others? Do we look to the consequences, or to the purity of our souls? How do we feel most blessed?"

— Rev. Bret S. Myers, 1/29/2014