**Does your faith do anything? By Thailer Jimerson**

*“God dwells among the lowliest of men. He sits on the dust-heap among the prison convicts. With the juvenile delinquents He stands at the door, begging bread, He throngs with the beggars at the place of alms. He is among the sick…Therefore let him who would meet God visit the prison cell before going to the temple. Before he goes to church let him visit the hospital. Before he reads his Bible let him help the beggar standing at his door. If he visits the prison after going to the temple, does he not by so much delay his meeting with God?...If he fails to help the beggar at his door and indulges himself in Bible-reading, there is a danger lest God, who lives among the mean, will go elsewhere.”* – Toyohiko Kagawa

The quote above comes from a personal hero of mine. His life seems largely forgotten but at one time, during the early 20th century, he was considered Japan’s Ghandi and one of its most influential Christians. What made Kagawa stand out among his peers was nothing purely theological, but it was the sheer active force that he brought to his faith. Kagawa really tried to live like Jesus and he took the Lord’s teaching and manner of life with the utmost seriousness.

As we come to the back seat of Paul’s letter to the Galatians (the focus of our Sunday morning sermons), I’ve been constantly challenged by what Paul calls the heart of the Christian life: “faith working through love,” modeled upon the life of our messiah himself. That’s what really matters in the end: love – specifically, embracing the spirit-given impulse to love others no matter their ethnicity, their gender, their politics, their doctrine, and even if they’re our enemy.

If this is really the heart of what it means to be a Christian (that is, to be “like Christ”) then why is my faith often so inactive – or, at least, not as active as I wish it to be? This reminds me, again, of something else Kagawa was famous for saying: “I read in a book that a man called Christ went about doing good. It is very disconcerting to me that I am so easily satisfied with just going about.” Me? I’m a doctrine guy. My faith leans heavy towards and is defined mostly by Bible study. Different churches and their dogmas, the 1st century world and its context, all that fascinates me and drives me to read more and more as I grow in understanding the Bible through the lens of its authors. But do I allow myself to get so bogged down with scriptural minutia that I forget to look up and help those without a shepherd? Admittedly, I do.

Yes, Christ knew the Scriptures. But Christ also served and loved – *actively*.

Listen to what he says one day, at the front of his ministry, when he stands up in the synagogue to read the scriptures. He could have chosen any passage to define his ministry, but hear what he says: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” After finishing this passage from Isaiah, he sits down and to mouth-dropped faces, he says that he is the very fulfillment of this prophecy. And sure enough, the rest of Luke depicts a Jesus active in doing everything Isaiah foretold.

One might be tempted at this point to state the obvious, “Yes; but Thailer, Jesus had all these amazing powers and he could help anyone he wished. And I’m not him!” But did Jesus expect any less from those who call themselves his people? Consider the teaching of Matthew:

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ (Matthew 25.34-40)

So, does your faith do anything? What does it accomplish? If not, maybe you should drop this article, put down your Bible for a moment, and look for someone to love in Christ’s name.