Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Being Moulded – Week 19

Maybe God wants us to change how we live.

Day 127: Being moulded by God

The Bible, Christians claim, is a "living book" through which, as you read and ponder it, God speaks to you.

I haven't heard God speak to me yet…

Let's look at last week for example. As we examined each of those problematic versus, we ended up asking these questions:

- What are your thoughts about accountability of self, community, and others being responsible for their own actions?
- How do (scripture readings) teach you love of God? How do they teach you loving your neighbour as yourself?
- Where do you wrestle with your own selfishness vs. loving God and loving your neighbour as yourself? What adventures in your own life could you interpret at a deeper level?
- How can you focus everything in your life so that you serve life, and not death?
- How is belonging important to you? How does it feel to know that you belong to God through Christ, no matter your background?
- How does the church not show the fruit of the Kingdom of God? How does it show it? In other words, where can the church love God better, and love our neighbours and each other better? What can you do (through prayer and action) to bring fruit of the Kingdom of God?

As we try to answer each of those questions, we change, even if just a little bit. We change in our thoughts, in our actions, in the way we look at life. Those changes, I suggest, are God working with us to help us realize our gifts in working for His kingdom. The answers we come up with may be God's intuitions and guidance working through us – this is "God's speaking". Beginning tomorrow we'll look at another way in which God can work in us.

How have you changed

- in taking this course so far?
- In reading the Bible?

Where do you see God at work in your life?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 128: Back to church.

You may remember on day 103 I asked you to go to church. I hope you have been continuing! I would like to dive into some of what you may be experiencing there. As you know, we started with the deliberateness of the architecture and furniture.

Yes – I thought that was a weird place to start.

It is something to be aware of though! We are influenced by our environment – and in the Anglican Church's case, that environment has a 2,000+ year history of development. The altar and the cross are focal points. Other focal points may be the speaking platform (called the pulpit), the reading platform (the lectern), the music area (the choir) and instruments (often an organ or piano, but may be drums and other instruments). The baptismal font may be given prominence as well. All of these are important to the underlying belief of the community. For example, the lectern is important because reading scripture is important, while the pulpit is important because speaking scripture into our everyday lives is important.

What do you think the importance of each item in the worship centre is to the community which gathers each Sunday? Are there other items which strike you as important which aren't mentioned, and can you suggest why they may be important?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 129: Conversation

At its heart, worship is conversation with what is being worshiped, and conversation within (amongst) the worshiping community. It may be adoration, it may be praise, it may be requesting, it may be begging, it may be thanking – but it is always conversation. Communal worship is communal conversation.

What an interesting concept – communal conversation.

I'm glad you think so! I'd like to explore with you how the conversation in an Anglican Church is structured, and why it is structured that way.

Why can't we just say, "Hi God, I'm here, how are you?" or something like that? Why do we need a structure?

Excellent questions – and you may encounter some communities, such as the Quakers, who are much more along the lines of what you suggest. Anglican worship is built upon the history of how the community has worshiped since the time of Jesus, through the early church, the Middle Ages, and into today – so it's had a long time of refinement, reflection, and review. Part of the reasons it's deliberately structured is because there are important things to remind ourselves about each time we meet, as well as important things to say to God each time. This doesn't mean that other prayers can't be said as well, as long as the community at large agrees. I'll briefly go through some favourite prayers we say together, and then step back to look at the overall structure of the service.

List some items which you think it would be good to remind yourself about each day, and others which it would be good to share with God each day. What would be good on a weekly basis as opposed to daily?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 130: Welcome

The Holy Eucharist service out of the Book of Alternative Services begins with,

Celebrant The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.
People And also with you.

What a prayer to begin with! It is saying, "May you have the gift of the overwhelming love of Christ given in His sacrifice with you. May the overwhelming love of God who created you be with you. May the fellowship, true one-ness of the Holy Spirit, to guide, strengthen, and encourage you, be with you." All of that is contained within that opening – it is not just a greeting, but more importantly, a prayer, to God for you and to you for God.

How is this prayer a request to you? How is it a request to God? What does its realization mean?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 131: Response

The service continues with,

Celebrant Almighty God,
All to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

First, let's be humble and recognize reality: God knows everything about us. There is nothing we can keep secret from Him, even if we wanted to. So, let's recognize that! Then, after recognizing the fact that God knows every single thing about us, we ask to be cleansed and healed: through the Holy Spirit, the Presence of God, "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts" – bring what we think cognitively, and what we think emotionally, in line with Your desires, Oh Lord. Do this so we may, more and more, perfectly love you through our words and actions, and in that active love, magnify, exalt, praise, establish and defend Your holiness, Your reputation, Your pre-eminent existence above all. Do all this through our Lord Who Saved Us, Jesus the Christ.

What a prayer for us to offer to God, in response to our opening greeting which has blessed us.

What does this prayer mean to you?

Share your thoughts with others whom you trust.

Day 132: Another Favourite

Celebrant Glory to God,
All whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.

This prayer is said after we have had communion (which we shall go into in some detail later). I think it's frankly amazing. "God can do more *through us* than we can comprehend – infinitely more. Glory to God! Glory in past generations, in the current generation, and in the next. Glory in the Church, the body of Christ, the people gathered as His Temple. Glory in Christ Himself. Glory from the beginning of time to the end!"

God can do amazing things – and you, working with Christ, will have impact for eternity, far beyond what you perceive. You are exceedingly important to God – and He will use the gift of your one-ness with Him for His eternal purposes. He loves you and is greatly pleased with you.

Just as from a small seed a huge tree can arise, God can create great things from you. What struggles or comfort do you have with this?

This week we've covered how, in our prayers (conversations), we're first given the gift of the love of God, fellow-ship with God, and one-ness with God. In response we ask God to cleanse us, heal us, wherever we miss the mark of God's holiness. And then we glorify God, acknowledging that God can do infinitely wondrous things through us, things we possibly only dimly comprehend – and we implicitly request, 'please do this, Lord.' Just like when we read the Bible, the conversations we have with God in our worship are asking God to mould us – actively change us, more and more, into participants of an abundant life with Him, where we live in and pursue shalom (as per Day 5) with Christ.

What do you think of asking our heavenly Father to mould you into participating in an active life with Him? If you've been a church member for a while, did you realize you were doing that?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 133: Rest

We come again to the seventh day, so today we rest. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.