

THURSDAY – April 23rd

CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: Help me do...what is right.

Righteous Lord, I don't know how to be righteous. Only you can bring me righteousness through your obedience to the Father. Help me become like you so that I can claim the righteousness that you have already given. Let others see you in my life and help me do what is right today. May I stay focused upon you so that my actions lead other to you. In your righteous name, I pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 3:4-7

KEY VERSE: 1 John 3:7:

“Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous” (NRSV).

Doing what is right – hmm – that’s a real conundrum. In our day, determining what is right or wrong in a given situation is often extremely complex. Often it is very difficult to see things in a purely right or wrong perspective, let alone know what the proper action to take may be. As believers, it is essential to let ourselves be led by the Holy Spirit as we struggle to make right choices – in thought, word and deed. As I sit here writing this devotional I have many thoughts about which verse from the reading to choose, and how to convey my thoughts into words which will stimulate your spirit to grow in your faith, love and response to our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ. There are often many words that would antagonize some. That would not be doing what is right. Unfortunately, I am not always aware of what those words would be and I might stumble into the wrong words as easily as the right ones. Therefore, as I sit typing into my computer, I rely on the Holy Spirit to guide me. I may not always get it right, but at least I am aware that I need guidance and seek it first. I am reminded to *“seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (Matthew 6:33). I know these words are spoken as a part of a teaching about worry, especially worry about insignificant things which we spend an inordinate amount of time choosing, such as which clothes to wear or what food to eat. There are many who have no choices to make about these things. They wear the only thing they have and eat what is placed before them and are very thankful for it because the alternative is no food at all. Yet, even they are admonished to seek God’s kingdom first! But I think seeking God’s kingdom first is the beginning of doing what is right so that the choices we make in all our thoughts, words and deeds lead to righteousness and life instead of leading us in wrong directions.

The second thing that we can do to insure that our decisions are “right” ones is to choose love as the lens through which we judge our actions (including our thoughts and our words). If we are in doubt about the “rightness” of our actions, we can consider if what we are about to do is being done out of love or not. All our behavior, both in thought and deed needs to emanate out of the love which we have for our God and one another. If it is done to hurt someone either deliberately or negligibly without regard to its consequences, then it is not something which is right, even if it is not something inherently wrong. Our motivation for doing something is as important in the concept of right actions as the deed itself. There are certainly actions which are obviously wrong – taking someone’s life, stealing someone’s things, etc. But, more often than not, there are choices to be made which may seem very innocent and right which are not because of the consequences for someone else. Knowing this is not

always simple nor do we always have the information we need in order to make the right choice. That is when the guidance of the Holy Spirit becomes very important in our lives. Most of us are not used to consulting God for everything we think, say and do. Perhaps we need to cultivate that relationship, a relationship of submission to God's indwelling Spirit.

We are on a journey between the Easter resurrection and the arrival in our hearts of the power and authority of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Pentecost, which arrives in a few weeks is often relegated to a simple birthday celebrate of the church. In actuality, it is the arrival of God's power and authority living within us in order to make right choices and further the kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven. Making right choices or doing right as our scripture passage says may not be easy, but it is not impossible. The righteousness we seek is a right-ness with God and humanity. It is not a cause to feel smug or good about ourselves. The righteousness our gospel writer attributes to doing right things is not about us at all. It is about living in a right relationship with God and those around us (near and far). There are many injustices in our world that we perpetuate by our actions, often simply because we are unaware that what we do affects people far away from ourselves. Learning about justice issues can help us to do right. Ultimately, we can only do what we believe is right and leave the rest to the Lord. But, we cannot stick our heads in the sand and continue to perpetuate the injustices because we do not want to see what we are doing. As we continue our resurrection journey, let us strive to do what is right, asking for guidance from the Holy Spirit, acting out of love for God and one another and seeking justice through our actions. Hallelujah! Christ is risen! Let us proclaim him and his righteousness through our actions.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: Matthew 6:25-34

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:

1. How often do I seek God first before I do things?
2. Do I depend on the Holy Spirit to guide me through my actions? Why or why not?
3. How often do I examine my motives for my actions? Who do they benefit, me or others?

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:

Take a look at the last 24 hours of your life. List some of the choices you made and the actions you took. Ask yourself if you believe they were "right" choices or actions. If you believe the answer is yes, explore your motivation for them. If your answer is no, how could you order your life so that you can be more consistent in doing the right things? How often did you consult the Lord or your understanding of what is right in making your choices?

Holy Lord, I know that I am not as consistent as I would like to be in making the right choices and doing the right things in my life. Help me to consult you more often when I have decisions, both large and small, to make. Help me to seek your kingdom first in my choices so that the consequences will lead to a right relationship with you and my fellow humans and further your kingdom here on earth. In your powerful name, I pray. Amen.