(For Monday, June 19, 2017) Did you know He's ALWAYS listening?

"Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him." (1Sam.1:17, ESV)

I'm an Episcopal Priest. After the People's Confession on Sunday, right before we begin Communion, I say, "Almighty God have mercy on you…" I don't say, "**May** Almighty God have mercy on you…" so it's not a request I'm making to God on their behalf. Nor do I say "I absolve you of your sin." No. It's really more a simple reminder to the people that God has heard their prayers of confession and penitence, and that he is always faithful to those who earnestly pray to him. That's what Eli is doing with Hannah in this passage from 1st Samuel. Often in our moments of crisis, we simply need to be reminded that God always hears us when we earnestly pray. The specifics of how he answers our prayers is up to him. And the beautiful thing is, he always provides an answer to prayer in ways that are much more perfect than we could possibly imagine – even if we can't see that at the time.

Is there someone you know that needs to be reminded that God is always listening?

(For Tuesday, June 20, 2017) Just how far do you think we would have gotten without Him?

"He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers. Yet they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert." (Ps.78:16-17, ESV*)*

Over and over again in the Bible, God's people cry out to him for salvation. And although God always hears them and, in his time, though he brings his faithful people to safety, those same people never-the-less continue sinning and rebelling against him. What it really took to break and transform our stubborn and rebellious hearts was an act of perfect sacrifice of himself executed NOT when we were crying out to him for mercy, but when we were screaming for him to be crucified. **THAT'S** what it took to break our hearts open so we could receive his grace and mercy. Nothing else would do for the stubborn, prideful, rebellious likes of you and me.

OF COURSE God exists and loves us!!! If he didn't, how else can you explain why self-centered, ambitious, devious mankind hasn't already destroyed himself??? Without the hand of an all-loving, long-suffering God working his will in our world, we would have done ourselves in long ago!

(For Wednesday, June 21, 2017) Is praising God a regular part of your day?

"And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them [the Disciples] speak in his own language. And they were amazed and said… "We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." (Acts 2:6,7a,11b, ESV)

When people started speaking in other tongues during the building of Babel, the result was confusion. (See Gen.11:1-9) But with the "anti-Babel" of Pentecost, the result is perfect comprehension and unity among people of different languages and cultures. The different outcome of Pentecost probably had a lot to do with the focus and content of the people's speech. Note that on that first Pentecost Sunday the people were all *"telling in [their] own tongues the mighty works of God"* – i.e. praising The Lord. Over and over again, both in Scripture and in life, I find that the effective remedy to fear, discouragement, loss, temptation, fatigue and so many other challenges we face – very often the best remedy is to simply and earnestly praise God.

When was the last time you "spoke the mighty works of God"?

(For Thursday, June 22, 2017) What's the value of your relationship with God?

"And he[Jesus] said, 'Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. (Lk.21:3, ESV)

This verse about "the widow's mite" changes the way we see the universe. In the eyes of Jesus, and in the mind of God, a thing's value is not defined by its price. Instead, it is the **cost** of a thing which yields its value. This is why "check-book charity," such as that practiced by the rich in this passage from Luke is not transformative. Oh sure, if you give generously to your Church or your favorite charity, this will surely end up blessing a number of people, as long as your donations are wisely and effectively employed. But if you really want your own life to be transformed, take the necessary time away from your job or your other activities to actually serve in the lunch-line at your local homeless shelter, or go on your Church's next mission trip. Yes, it will cost you some time and energy, but it is precisely that cost which makes this type of commitment so valuable.

So, how much is your relationship with God worth? Shouldn't it cost you ***something***?

(For Friday, June 23, 2017) Is there something in your life that needs tearing-down?

"As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." (Lk.21:6, ESV)

Most scholars agree that the destruction prophesied by Jesus in Luke Chapter 21 was a prophecy about the destruction of the Temple by the Flavian Dynasty of Rome in 69/70 AD. But could part of this "deconstruction" work also be about the tearing down of the Temple Veil at the Crucifixion? For me, the tearing of the Veil that separated the people from the Holy-of-Holies was all about God's tearing down those barriers in this life that separate us from his perfect peace. And this "ministry of reconciliation" can take various forms. It can be God removing the barrier of sin that stands between Him and us. It is often about the Holy Spirit's removal of the barriers of pride and selfishness which separate us from each other. And even more fundamentally, our salvation by God's grace through the faith in Christ removes many of the barriers that reside within us, separating the earthly person from the Spiritual being that, through our redemption, we can now come to fully know.

What "de-construction projects" is God doing in your life right now?

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