

(For Monday, December 26, 2016 – St. Stephen, Martyr) Do your methods match your motives?

*“But they [the Sanhedrin] cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him [Stephen].” (Acts 7:57 – RSV)*

Ironically, the Sanhedrin became enraged with Stephen because he was speaking the truth. There are points in life when our back gets up because we are convicted about something. Whenever our dander is up we need to stop for a moment and examine ourselves. Why are we becoming angry? There is certainly such a thing as righteous anger in the face of evil. But more often than not, our fallen nature leads us to become enraged because we don't like to hear an ugly truth – at least not if it's about us! The Bible says, “Be angry but sin not.” (Eph.4:6) If a faithful Christian is confronted by something convicting him or her about a sinful word or deed, the appropriate response is repentance, not anger. At least, that should be our behavior if the methods we adopt for living this life are to match the motives we profess as Believers.

So, what about you – do your methods match your motives?

(For Tuesday, December 27, 2016 – St. John, The Evangelist) What's your Spiritual patience like?

*“Jesus said to him [Peter], ‘If it is my will that he [John] remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!’”*

It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that our every waking moment should involve some decisive activity to build God's Kingdom. But the conclusion of John's Gospel indicates differently. Peter was told to follow Jesus – where we can only guess. But Peter's young friend John was to simply wait there by the fireside where they had just finished breakfasting with The Lord. Jesus told Peter that John's activity of waiting for his arrival was just as important as whatever action Peter was going to take. In a similar fashion, Martha did while Mary listened. (See Lk. 10:28-42) There are times in the life of the Christian when we are simply supposed to wait...and listen...and even just to rest. Let's not get so wrapped up in your working for The Lord that we forget to wait on Him too.

When was the last time you took the chance to simply sit at God's feet and rest in His presence?

(For Wednesday, December 28, 2016 – The Holy Innocents) Are you breaking God's heart?

*“A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.” (Jer. 31:15)*

Today marks the massacre of the children of Bethlehem described in Matthew 2:16. It's staggering to read *Jeremiah* and realize that God had known for thousands of years that this was going to happen. Can you imagine how much pain this must have caused The Father? But God allowed these infants to be murdered so that His own son could come to us, and eventually be cruelly murdered as well. In a strange way, God's allowing of this carnage is further proof of just how much he loves us. How else are we to explain the immense pain that he bore on our behalf? We speak of God in terms of majesty and awe – and certainly he is infinitely awesome and mightily majestic. But, he also has a heart as big as Texas, and we break it thousands of times a day.

So, when was the last time you broke the Father's heart? Have you told him you're sorry?

(For Thursday, December 28, 2016) Did you know worry is a sin?

*“Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.” (Is. 12:2a)*

We are told repeatedly in Scripture that we are saved by grace through faith. So, that means that anytime we let ourselves become mired in worry, we are really succumbing to an attack on God’s saving grace. Now, I’m not talking about concern or caution here. A healthy and thoughtful concern for the various pitfalls of life is usually a good thing. But when we start losing sleep, or joy, or the ability to focus on the productive things of life because we have become so mired in obsessive worry about what the future may hold for us, that is most definitely sinful. Especially if we agree that sin is anything that distances us from an abiding love of Our Lord. Jesus has already vanquished the most serious threat the universe can ever throw at any of us – death itself! So, don’t we believe that his hands are big enough to deal with our personal problems?

What can you do today to lay your worries at the foot of the Cross?

(For Friday, December 29, 2016) Do you need to refocus the aim of your prayers?

*“This they [the Pharisees] said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” (Jn.8:6)*

Jesus ignores the question of the Pharisees by stooping down to write with his finger on the dust of the temple pavement. With the woman caught in adultery, the teachers of the Law were trying to trap Christ into making a declaration which would place him in conflict with his message of mercy and forgiveness. But Jesus, knowing what was in their hearts, wantonly ignored their question. There is a little of the Pharisee in all of us. James warned the early Christians that if their prayers weren’t being answered, maybe they were praying for the wrong thing. (See Js.4:3) So, when it seems that our prayers are falling on deaf ears, perhaps it is because they are not aimed at the right target. It’s no good asking the Lord of infinite love to bless us if it means impeding His blessing of others.

Do you need to refocus your prayer life?