

## **Prayer and Action**

Jesus has many teachings on prayer. Often his focus is very specific. Many of God's people are suffering. They cry out for deliverance and ask how long, oh Lord, how long? This kind of suffering can make time seem like a prison and make it feel as though God has gone silent. I have to think that many displaced by hurricane Harvey feel this way.

Jesus often speaks of the complex nature of the relationship between prayer and faith.

Prayer is an expression of hope, a way of affirming our trust that with God in the picture we can always expect something new. Prayer keeps the door of our hearts and minds open to anticipation for the future.

You see, if we expect nothing of the future, our lives dry up. Without expectation and hope, life stands still. For all of us in those times that will try us, Jesus reminds us that there can be new life and movement when we put feelings of defeat to flight and refuse to accept things as they are.

Jesus invites us to look ahead toward that which is not yet. Whether in times of natural disaster, personal crisis or if we are feeling overwhelmed by a world locked in war and madness, Jesus wants us to know that pain and despair need not have the last word. Jesus teaches us to persist, not only in prayer, but also in hope and action.

He is driving this one point home: God hears and responds to the cries of God's people — God hears our yearnings for justice and for peace. Our yearnings are held by the promise that God does indeed hear our prayers. Our challenge is to trust this promise. This trust is rooted in faith — and by extension — hope.

It is so easy for us to see despair, it is easy to identify those things that frighten us ---but often we find it so much harder to trust that God is at work in the midst of our world, and our hope and faith can become paralyzed by despair.

So as we see the pain and suffering life sometimes holds, Jesus encourages us not to let our faith retreat. More than that, Jesus tells us that we can join with God and be instruments of God's love. When we root our lives in the belief that the power of God is stronger than any other force in the universe, the shadow of fear is cast away and we are then able to act.

This is the power of hope, this is the power of faith, and this is the power that Christ left to us when he promised us the Holy Spirit. We are the people of God; with God's help we can work wonders.

Because God loves us with such an everlasting love, we can, with confidence, and in God's grace, become the very people who bring hope and healing into the world in which we live, flooding it with light and hope.

Through faith and hope we persist in prayer and we then take action. As a people of faith we can be in touch with the struggles of the world and not just close our eyes and hope they will go away.

In our belief that God does deliver us, we can look at the pain in our own lives and in the world and not say cynically, "that's just the way it is." But, instead we can look at suffering wherever we find it and say, "I am not powerless to help." While we still have breath in our bodies to pray and then the courage to act, we will find that sometimes we are the answer to someone else's prayer.

We are the people of God and we have the power to change the world because this is who God created us to be, and because Jesus has shown us the Way. So pray always and don't lose heart, for God's action is always at hand. In fact God's action is often in our hands.

Below you will find a copy of Bishop José's letter regarding the disaster in Texas. It contains a link to Episcopal Relief and Development, a way to donate to the victims through people directly on the ground. ERD is very highly rated by Charity Navigator and your offerings will be used fully and well. And of course, pray, and pray again as this will be a long-term recovery.

Grace and Peace, Stephanie+