

Mission Reflection

for Lent



Seafarers International House

Scripture

“Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

“Thus when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.¹

“And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men, Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moths nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”²

Message

An independent survey found that 65% of “millennials” never participate in worship services and rarely, if ever, pray with others.³ While we may despair of the absence of millennials in our pews, it would seem safe to say that pompous faith against which the Gospel admonishes isn’t a millennial failing.

We are more likely to associate millennials with “selfies”. What is it about these ubiquitous photos posted on social media platforms? Apparently all of those “likes” are a quick and easy way to boost one’s own ego. Maybe these selfies are a little hypocritical, but they may also reflect the discomfort that millennials face in

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dealing with the “big” questions: what kind of person was I born to be and how can I become that person more fully?⁴

As one millennial has explained, young adults today have plenty of reasons to distrust institutions – financial recklessness and dishonesty in the great recession of 2008, infidelity and depravity among leaders in government, education and religion and the sense of security ripped out on September 11, 2001 and in countless subsequent school shootings. “Why should we believe that we are safe, that we can achieve the “American Dream,” that God is really here?”⁵

Maybe all of us - Gen-X'ers, baby-boomers and the silent generation - should embark on our Lenten journey this year from the millennials' perspective. In these forty days, let's search out genuine faith and community in Christ. Let's live our lives for the sake of the Gospel. Let's become part of a community that loves God and serves neighbors.⁶ And let's admit that we don't have all the answers, but are willing to explore the questions. Let's prepare ourselves for the Easter Miracle.

Prayer

Frankly, Lord, the answers do not come easily: what kind of person was I born to be and how can I become that person more fully? Be with us on our Lenten journey, as we begin with humility, proceed with repentance and conclude with hope for forgiveness. Amen

1. Matthew 6:1-6
2. Matthew 6:16-18
3. W. Merle Longwood, “Spirituality, Religion, and the Millennial Generation of None’s”, *JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN ETHICS*, October 1, 2014
4. *Ibid*
5. Jessica Cain, “A Millennial’s Perspective on Millennials”, *JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN ETHICS*, October 1, 2014
6. For example, consider visiting an asylum seeker or immigrant imprisoned in the Elizabeth Detention Center, We'll make all the arrangements, give you a helpful orientation and accompany you on the way. Contact Gabrielle Rizzuto (grizzuto@sihny.org) for more information. Or consider baking a few tins of cookies for our port chaplains to take aboard ship and deliver to seafarers. Contact Chris Roehrer (cvr@sihny.org) for more information.

Seafarers International House serves seafarers and immigrants with pastoral care, hospitality, social assistance, advocacy and prayer in the ports in Baltimore, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia, and in an 84-room Guesthouse in Manhattan. The Guesthouse accommodates more than seafarers and immigrants. It's available for church gatherings, civic groups and individuals in need of safe, affordable lodging. Our Guesthouse helps them accomplish their mission goals, and their patronage helps us accomplish ours. “Sleep Well By Doing Good.”

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