

July 10, 2011

Praying with all of our strength

Bringing a cup of cold water to a thirsty world, Bringing healing to broken hearts, Bringing the Bread of Life to people hungry for a better way to live, Visiting those imprisoned by poverty and the devastation of Hurricane Katrina

In addition to all of that, I see a connection between our mission to Mississippi and Micah 6:8 (quote)

By working to restore people to safe, sanitary, and secure houses, we have shown our love of mercy.

We have humbly walked with our God by answering God's call to serve those in need, following the example of Christ.

But more than that, I am struck by the truth that we have  
“done justice.”

The prophet Micah does not tell us to “execute” justice or  
“exact” justice or even “demand” justice. He says “DO  
justice”!

As we read through the Bible, we can see that God’s justice  
is not retribution. The Kingdom of God is not where “an eye  
for an eye” is enforced.

Instead, God’s justice means that everyone gets what they  
need. This is the reason for the emphasis in Jesus’ ministry  
on serving the poor and the needy. In point of fact, this  
emphasis is throughout the Old Testament as well.

The world has always needed to be brought back into  
balance between the wealthy and the poor. The Kingdom of  
God was near because that balance, that equity, that justice,

God's justice, was being brought about in the life and actions of Jesus.

This past week we were not just building houses. We were doing some Kingdom-building!

As we insulated, painted, sawed, hammered, and installed baseboard, doors and trim, we were working to bring the Kingdom of God near---to give people what they need one person at a time---a home of their own to replace what was taken by Katrina.

We were "doing justice!" And as we were "doing justice," our every task became a prayer

---every hit of a hammer

----every stroke of a paintbrush

---every measurement

---every cut of the saw

---every ounce of insulation blown into an attic

Was a prayer. Not a prayer with words, but with action.

Christ told us that the greatest commandment is to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Mostly, I think we pray with our minds, forming words and thoughts.

There are times when we pray with our hearts---pleading, asking, crying, for intercession or for help.

And we also pray from our souls---prayers that are too deep for words, and prayers that are pure and holy times spent in the presence of God.

This week I realized what it means to pray with our strength!

It is a way of doing God's work---God's justice----that uses our strength, our muscles.

Instead of a heart-felt prayer, we can pray a body-enacted prayer. We connect with God in a way that is not a conscious or even a subconscious thought. It doesn't originate in the mind, soul, or heart.

It doesn't come from the inside-out.

It comes from the outside-up!

In the liturgy for Holy Communion, we often say that we present ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice to God.

Whether the team is aware of it or not, this is what they offered to God this week---themselves as a holy and living sacrifice.

Through sore muscles, gallons of sweat, and even the blood that was sucked up by many mosquitoes, they have sacrificed themselves

To bring the Kingdom of God a little nearer to some of the people who have been out of their homes for nearly 6 years,

One house at a time, one person at a time, we are transforming the world!

We are building houses, but it is the owners who make those houses into homes!

Friday afternoon we went to visit Mr. McKee. We worked on his house last July. It was finished and he moved in last October. He graciously invited us to come inside and he showed us around.

We saw a neat, comfortable, peaceful HOME!

We helped to build a house, but it is Mr. McKee who has made it his HOME!

God has answered all of the prayers we prayed as we worked last year, and God will answer the prayers of this past week as well---prayers for the people who will make these houses their homes!

Prayers that we prayed as we did God's justice.

God's Kingdom has come very near!

Praise God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, in whom all things are possible.

Amen.