

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster  
Sunday, September 26th, Pentecost XVIII  
Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22, Psalm 124, James 5:13-20, Mark 9:38-50

Am I the only one not about to rush out and cut off or out an eye, foot or hand?

Jesus is trying to make a point, that it is not about the parts of the body but something else, a more subtle and less obvious. We know from Psychology that to do so won't solve the problem. Although we know that cutting off the hand has been done in that part of the world to punish thieves, and actually sentences them to starve to death unless someone feeds them.

I cannot help thinking that body is used as a metaphor for the community together. Paul in Corinthians talks about this.....

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. and if one member suffers, all suffer together with it, and if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it,

And in James for today; you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

This is the positive side of the phrase toward the beginning of the gospel this morning....

"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea."

In other words, get rid of or stop anything you do which causes a little one to stumble. There may be things you do which are fine for you but others may not be able to handle. A poor example may be; the consuming of alcohol. There is a reason why only those above a certain age are supposed to do so.

But I think it isn't just not doing, but doing what is helpful to others.

**Matthew 25 comes to mind, Jesus said;**

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?

38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?

39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'

40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,[a] you did it to me.

This again seems to suggest that it is more about what we do, and how we treat others than what we say we believe.

The image of being salt may be helpful in that can you taste the salt in the food if you just read it in the recipe? And the idea of salt in the food is not to taste the salt, but salt enhances the other ingredients.

Amen