



SAINT MARK'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

You wake up in the morning, grab a cup of coffee, no time to eat. Jump in the car and are off to work. While driving the same route to work that you always drive, your mind starts to daydream, maybe it's to some distant island for a dream vacation, you imagine what the waves sounds like crashing against the shore, what the sand feels like as you bury your feet in it. Your dreams are interrupted by the thoughts of all the to dos you have to do that day. I have to send that email I have been putting off, I can't seem to word it correctly. Other thoughts and anxieties rush in, did I pay the bill? Did the kids get their lunches before they left? Did I turn off the iron? Those things have auto-off features right? I'm pretty sure they do. Before you know it you are parking in the same spot you always park. As you put the vehicle into park, you wonder, I just went through three stop lights and made five turns, and don't remember a single moment of it. Did I stop at the lights?

I'm sure many you have experienced the kind of morning I just described. We can get so caught up in the minutia of the day to day world that it's is as if we wander through it, never present, never aware of what is actually going on in the moment. As if we are asleep to the present. And you can't blame us for being so scatter minded. Now more than ever we have information competing for our attention from a variety of sources constantly. 24-hour news, smart phones, social media, you can carry the whole power of internet in your pocket. Since we have this capability we use it, we post, and tweet, and share, and like, and re-post and re-tweet, and google. You're more likely to see people taking pictures of their food before their meals and posting it than praying before the meal. And I want to stress that there is nothing inherently wrong with the internet, and social media, and

technology. I'm a fan of all them. The church has been dealing with technology throughout its history. At one point Gutenberg and his printing press were a disruptive technology. I can see church leaders back in the day "wringing their hands what are we going to do when everyone has books" You see, you either catch the technology wave or get left behind. But it also helps to know how to surf. The point is, that today that wave is bigger than ever and we have to be more skilled than ever to navigate it. In a world with so many things jumping out and saying "hey pay attention to me!" "Hey you haven't worried about me in a second what's going on?" In a world full of notification dings, rings, and buzzes. You have to be intentional, you have to pay attention, you have to wake up. "Now is the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers."

The answer that the church has to: How can I be more intentional in living my life? How can I be more aware of the present and what is going on around me? How can I quiet the anxieties and flood of information coming at me? How do I wake up? The answer the church has, has not changed since Jesus was running around in a place called Galilee, the answer is to pray. Think of how many times Jesus would go off and pray. It's probably the only thing that kept him sane. Prayer is the answer and no matter where you are on that road, I can tell you, you need more of it in your life. I don't think I have ever met anyone who said, we gee Father Michael things are going great, the only thing is I just have to much prayer in my life right now. Our first responsibility as Christians is to pray.

Prayer is how we as Christians, mark time, morning and evening prayer, holy days. It's how we show thanks, every Sunday primarily, it's how we ask for what is on our hearts, how we show concern for others. Prayer in all its variety of forms is how a Christian proceeds in the world.

We are all different and there are different types of prayer in many forms. There is silent contemplative prayer, active spoken prayer, old stand-bys,

“Our father who art in heaven” and extemporaneous on the spot prayers, “Lord help me pass the calculus test.” You can pray by yourself or with others, and should do both. To put it simply prayer is whenever you stop to notice God and take the time to notice with God what is going on in your life.

I invite you to spend more time noticing with God this week. You don't have to go off to a chapel or church, though you certainly could. You can pray wherever you are. If you're driving in the car on the way to work in the morning, when you at a stop light say a prayer for what you virtue you desire God to help increase in you. Red-light. “God help me to be more patient.” If you're sitting down to a meal and are about to post a sweet pic of your food to instagram, while you do it say a prayer of thanksgiving for the nourishment, for the farmers who grew the food, and for the hands that prepared it. Find a weekly group prayer meeting, like morning prayer or centering prayer, walk with others down the road of prayer for a bit. “For where two or three are gathered in my name I am among them.” Sometimes the prayers will be really fruitful, sometimes they will be spiritually dry. Keep on praying. For as you pray, as you notice things in your life with God. You begin to see God in all things. The moments you spend with God seem to leak out of your prayer time and into your everyday time. And as this occurs you engage with the world with a little more patience, a little more kindness, and a little more love. And you bring the kingdom of God a little bit nearer than when you first began.