

Second Hand Preacher

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 30, 2015

James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27

I recently saw the musical, *The Music Man*. In the production, Professor Harold Hill is working a con to sell instruments to families and not properly teaching the students how to use the instruments like he promised. He tells the boys they don't have to practice, but simply use the "think method" in order to learn how to play their instruments. Any music teacher and really any somewhat rational person knows that Professor Hill's method is a sham. Good old practice is the only way to succeed.

St. James is a believer that this is true with the spiritual life, as well. There is no "think method" that will help us live a balanced spiritual life. We can't just hear the words, but we need to act on them as well. We are called by the Church to be people of action. In his churches, I'm sure James encountered people who were well-meaning by reading scripture and listening to preaching. He wanted them to seek more. He wanted those words to motivate the people to dedicate their whole lives to the Lord. This will hopefully cause them to have the good news of the Gospel to propel them into good deeds.

We need to continue to listen to James. We are called, perhaps, to work in justice to change a system so it works better for the people that are being served. Pro-life ministry is an example of this. Working with regulations to greater serve the poor would be helpful. Even working to care for our environment would be a way for us to show dominion over the earth. We are also called to acts of charity. This allows us to serve the immediate needs of those who desire help. Hope House serving the homeless, Dorothy Day Center feeding the hungry, and Sharing and Caring Hands serving the poor of Minneapolis; these are all shining examples of charity in action. We are to be doers, but we shouldn't neglect hearing, as this can be spiritual food for us who serve the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those who desperately need our help.