



Faith in Action



A Sermon By
The Rev. Richard D. Meadows, Jr.

February 4, 2018
Grace Episcopal Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

An audio version of this sermon may be found on the Grace Church website at
<http://graceepiscopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018-02-04-RDM.mp3>.

Faith in Action

The Rev. Richard D. Meadows, Jr.
Grace Episcopal Church
The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
February 4, 2018

Good morning Grace, Let me begin with a quote on Faith in Action by Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Faith in action is love, and love in action is service. By transforming that faith into living acts of love, we put ourselves in contact with God Himself, with Jesus our Lord.

Faith in action. My faith in action. In our Gospel reading I want to reiterate these words, After Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. I am focused here today because of my own personal dilemma lately. Let me tell you what it is.

You know everywhere we go now we see persons on the streets, homeless, cold, hungry, sure some are only looking for money to spend, but I'd believe most are truly in need, indeed. Over the last few months I have had this strange feeling, I don't know if it's from compassion burnout, or because of all of the things going on in my personal life, that I'm beginning to avoid contact. Compassion burnout happens when you have been serving for so long without rest you feel overwhelmed and you avoid ministry opportunities. It is very common. You give, give, give and you grow weary. I pull just beyond them and their signs, I now find myself looking down at my phone to avoid eye contact, I play my radio loud, I have this occupied look so I don't have to see my brothers and sisters in need. I'm feeling like the priest in Jesus' story about the man who was attacked by thieves and robbers on the Jericho Road. This priest come to the man and to avoid helping him he crosses over to the others side of the road. The man is bleeding, left for dead and he crosses over, just so he doesn't have to come in contact. He is on the way to work at the temple, his important ministry job at the office. He doesn't have time to see about the man, left for dead.

Yesterday's seminar here at Grace presented by our racial justice team and Trinity Church Wall street, reminded me of how, as they said, We all want to create a better world—and that requires action and connection. Discerning shared values is crucial to forming powerful partnerships and moving forward with courageous intention. I want to live in that world, I want to participate courageously and tirelessly in that kind of world. I don't want a world free from trouble, I only want to become part of God's plan on earth to overcome that trouble. I'm trying to allow what I believe to match what I do. For me at times it is very, very difficult.

This morning's text in Mark, with Peter's mother in law encourages me, I find within the text the words that encourage me to engage others with love, to continue to use my spiritual gifts, to engage and to have a prayer life. That's what I find in the text, Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her...And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him, and in the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

My goal this morning is to encourage you to keep engaging the world by faith. Know this that the He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. You are in good company if you feel burned out. The text this morning helps me move beyond my feelings of despair and helplessness and feel energized to go back out and work in the field, in God's Kingdom.

The other day I was sitting in my car, in front of the salvation Army, there was a woman over on the side just beyond the entrance, she was thrashing about, bending her body at a 20 degree angle, one shoe off, hollering and crying, I can tell she was being tormented. I sat there in the car watching her, I thought for a moment she would stop, but she didn't. I had a choice, I could ignore her and continue to look at my phone or I could engage her in love. It came to me to go over and offer her the water I had. Her mouth was dry her face ashen. She took the water and in three movements without spilling a drop she drank 16 oz. of water. I began to pray for her and as I place my arm around her she held me tightly. I prayed for her and called upon the spirit that was causing her to act the way she was to come out. We moved from the shade over by the wall to the sunshine. I asked her could she feel the warmth of the sun. She said yes. She said, "I am starving and thirsty!" I had just come from the supermarket so I open my trunk and give her a banana and I open my bread and give her a slice. As we are standing by the trunk two women, reminding me of scribes and a Pharisee, come over and ask me why I am putting her in my trunk? I said, "Fool, I am giving her something to eat." She began to calm herself, I encouraged her to because someone had called the police and I knew they would arrest her.

She reminded me of putting my faith into action, I was again was energized because of the text and this woman I am once again feeling like I can do this. It reminds me of Mark 16:17 *"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues...and when come in contact with anything deadly, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."*

I want to encourage you when you feel skittish about ministry and have grown weary, remember the Gospel tells us Love will move us into action, faith will move us to action, and by doing so we come in contact with God, God's son Jesus and God's children. Move in with love, take someone by the hand, allow them to feel God's presence in your life, God is asking to feel the wind of the eagle's wing, run this race and He has you, walk and don't faint. Wait on God for the renewing of your strength.

Here at Grace not only are there many opportunities to involve yourself in ministry, but we have persons who pray for you and your strength. The ministry team, the DOK, the PVLEMS, your clergy, the members are praying for you. There is the Youth mission trip this summer to Florida, talk to Rebecca Lent about our homeless ministry, our Racial Justice ministry to help others overcome the history of pain of bigotry and discrimination, Sightlines and Strolling Seniors helping seniors with their spirituality an offering opportunities to fellowship, Visiting ministers and Eucharistic ministers, Lenten book studies, Men's fellowship and among many other opportunities there is the newly formed Refugee Family Ministry. All types of ways so the dilemma does not sit upon us like a rock. I pray this morning that God renews your strength, I pray that your faith becomes love in action, I pray that you find a place to pray. This morning you may ask the relevant question, how can I become more involved and not feel overwhelmed? We pray for you that you too like Jesus can find a hand to hold, a heart to make merry, a word in season and a fresh wind to journey on in the Work of Ministry. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.