

July 18, 2020

*“Somehow the day is never long enough, and my strength of will is never strong enough. Even in spite of my many failures keep me from discouragement; keep me from lowering my ideals; keep me from abandoning hope and from giving up.”* In the Evening

During our lives, we are blessed to encounter Christ through the life and witness of various people we encounter on our journey. For me, one such person was Richard Smith, a Lutheran priest who taught Pastoral Care and Greek at seminary. Rev. Smith was also my academic advisor. This made it a little challenging when I decided to drop my Greek class during my second semester in seminary. I remember going to his office and telling him I was dropping his class. He looked at me and in a very loving way asked why I was dropping his class. I told him that I felt overwhelmed and that I was going to try to get caught up on all the things that were slipping through the cracks. He looked back at me and in a very caring way said “I’ve been trying all my life to get caught and I’ve been unsuccessful. Let me know how this works out for you.” I dropped the class and needless to say the “extra” time did not enable me to catch up.

The words from the prayer *In the Evening* are probably words we all need to hear: (1) the day is never long enough, (2) keep me from lowering my ideals, and (3) keep from abandoning hope and from giving up.

One of my internal struggles is my failure to get a birthday gift to my close friends and relatives in time for their actual birthday. Frequently my gift arrived two to three months after an actual birthday. I’m embarrassed and ashamed with myself but I struggled to find that perfect, meaningful gift.

One day I was talking to my sister about my guilt and shame. She told me not to worry about it because my gifts had become somewhat epic. The recipients were excited because they didn’t know when a gift would arrive or what it would be. When a gift did arrive out of the blue it was another chance to celebrate a birthday that may have been a couple of months earlier.

So often we carry shame because we are not living up to our standards. Sometimes our standards are not realistic. I’ve reached a point that I can objectively look at my intent. Did I fail to do something because I deliberately wanted to hurt someone’s feelings? For the most part, I wanted to get that meaningful gift. I’m doing better with gift delivery but there is always something.

I also think about my conversation with Rev. Smith and realize that there is never enough time in the day for most of us to get everything done that we wish to get done during the day.

Think of the ways you hold yourself to challenging standards. Pray about letting go of the guilt or shame. Don’t lower your ideals. Don’t abandon hope.