

A Sermon on Prayer, Meditation, Magical and/or Wishful Thinking  
Sermon by Minister Angela Smith of COPE for April 5th, 2020 (and beyond)

Why do you pray? In my life, at times where I've felt utterly alone as the sole person committed to truth and virtue in an otherwise vicious and horrifying environment, my faith in God (abstract archetype of Truth and All the Virtues) sustained my spirit and helped me through until out of such an environment and socializing with often honest and virtuous people who are not vicious and horrifying, but horrified when learning of my experiences in other environments. So, in the most desperate or horrifying of life experiences (including facing serious illness or injury or death of a loved one), I find praying helpful or comforting. I do wonder at times if that's my being a soothsayer for myself or relying on God for that and if so if that is an inappropriate use of prayer. It is my belief God understands and is happy to help in such situations if the will to live is unsteady as a result of horrifying environmental factors and God helps just by listening.

If not in the midst of any tragedy or horror, why pray? Does prayer irritate God where he knows we could do something to address the issue for which we seek aid in situations where that is possible and feasible? What do you pray for, guidance or freebies? When not in a horrifying environment, my prayers tend to be along the request for guidance. This is also true of my meditations. Either I have a personal problem I'm uncertain how to address or I'm seeking guidance and clarity on how best to help someone else with a problem. Sometimes I pray for help practicing one of the virtues where I'm not as virtuous as I'd like to be like with patience. But, I fear I've prayed too much for patience or to help with developing that and that prayer has been abundantly answered.

Many people believe in the power of their own belief that if they believe in freebies that such will manifest. There are all sorts of cults and quacks and charlatans that sell that idea for profit to the gullible, ignorant, and easily amused or entertained. And, while that's somewhat hilarious, I am concerned for those that fall victim to that fraud and those delusions. But, I'd say that line of thinking, if you want to call it thinking, is magical or wishful thinking. My PapaSam (and you may know someone who says this one too) used to say "Shit in one hand and wish in the other and tell me which fills up first" as a response to anything that could be likened to wishful/magical thinking. Wishes are free and paying someone to tell you if you believe it then it will come true if you really believe is absurd and quite stupid if you examine reality at all from a realistic perspective. Regardless of any peer pressure or undue influence to engage in such practices, it actually puts you further from achieving your goals in the event you are wishing for anything like a new car or something material rather than help with developing your virtues which are themselves abstract perfected and defined concepts that require contemplation and commitment which may include meditation or prayer unless you manifest them yourself or recognize them in others whether you use the phrase Namaste or not.

Alleviating or ending needless and unnecessary suffering requires simply identifying problems and solving them. Orphaned children need family homes and not enough family homes are available so they end up in horrifying institutional settings where they are discouraged from planning their own lives, thinking independently, or questioning

authority as a result of the environment itself and needs of the institution being prioritized over their needs. Then, they turn 18 and are released having aged out of supported care where they weren't prepared at all for independence because institutional settings are scheduled, controlled, and not intended for such children but used as emergency placements where family homes aren't available. Now, some states and locales are offering adult foster care to bridge that gap which still requires families to open their homes now to adult strangers who just need stability so they can achieve independence. But, some prefer to just pray or wish the homeless away and disregard the government's pleas for help from goodhearted people who will open their homes to their neighbors when in need. So, those orphans often become activists, homeless, criminals, or if particularly fortunate successfully independent without being distracted or dependent on tribalistic community support resulting from their circumstances. If you can open your home to someone in need, even a child, you will be answering their prayer and helping everyone including yourself who wishes to see the homeless population ethically reduced. Or, you can pray that God will do what you could do if willing and able. Or, you can try to wish it away or report the unfortunate to the authorities to get them locked up again just because they are a victim of circumstance. That last one would be considered praying to the government for redress. Citizen says "Government, I demand you do something about the homeless situation as long as you don't raise taxes." Government says "Are there any facilities, jails, detention centers, any beds available anywhere and we'll take the cheapest option for the sake of the taxpayers? Some labor trafficking or exploitation is expected, frowned upon, and if reported may result in investigation or prosecution of the provider of services. Let's round up the homeless." Homeless says "Can someone just give me a chance? I just need a moment to stabilize away from the elements, bathe, and a way to find employment and inexpensive shelter should I find employment. I've been trafficked or abused and live with traumatic stress. I just want to know what having the comfort of a real home is like so I have that sense of security and know how to live going forward in a real family or community so I don't feel like a constant outcast." Government says "Sounds like you are mentally ill and should be comfortable in an institutional setting for now. It will be up to those running it when you get released unless you choose to leave since placement or participation is voluntary unless you've been adjudicated." That's the reality. Praying, meditation, and wishing it wasn't doesn't change it.

So, please consider keeping lip service to yourself if not otherwise actively helping to solve a problem in a reasonable manner where you are part of the solution manifesting and materializing what you should know is God's will if honest and virtuous and understanding that God is the abstract archetype of all Truth and Virtue meant to inspire our lives, not do all the honest and virtuous stuff so we don't have to be bothered. And, some of us are more into that than others and can't carry the full burden ourselves and are sick of people who can't be bothered to do anything but make demands without offering any help themselves and demanding bargain basement prices on anything involving government spending while often not volunteering or donating to make sure those in actual need of help are helped with respect for their dignity and autonomy.

And, if you have the resources and the compassion, please open your home to someone in need or donate yourself to the most ethical charities for the homeless you can find that are not storefronts for human trafficking because the government cares about two things cost and bed availability. The government doesn't legislate morality, the free market does and we need to step up our game on that end and remember our role as citizens includes "We The People" as part of the establishment and we need to be active and responsible or understand the government can only do so much when we fail to do our part.

I do everything within my power with very limited resources to help as many as possible. But, I'm a minister and that's to be expected given my calling. But, I'd like all the other churches (people are all churches in my opinion unless corrupted into houses of ill-repute) to act more like it so Namaste has meaning where some only see its potential.

Speaking of "potential", did you know when someone says "You have potential" they are saying you lack merit or require work? See, if you have succeeded in some way in life, there's evidence of that and that is recognized as merit. If you have not so succeeded and/or are not gainfully employed, people recognize your potential for success or gainful employment where not looking to exploit you because you are too stupid to understand what potential means in their opinion. So, I'm highly educated and have achieved legislative changes and assist many people. That's merit and/or from some perspectives exceeding my estimated potential given the variables involved. What is a potentiality? "the possibility of something happening or of someone doing something in the future." Definition provided by Oxford via Google search. So, all the talk by cults and frauds about potential is just saying "As long as you are alive and have any mobility at all, you have the possibility of something happening or a future of some sort." Then they say, "You get out of it, what you put into it" and charge a fortune to those who believe the bullshit. Don't fall for it. Develop virtues like diligence, patience, empathy, mercy, compassion, and honesty. And, you'll need actual legitimate education and job skills for lasting success which requires a minimum of an accredited academic provider with transferable credits and/or on-the-job learning of a trade or skill. Many legitimate employers will actually pay for you to attend classes or even get degrees for advancement at their companies. But, you've always had potential and it isn't a magic word with special meaning even if cults say otherwise. It simply acknowledges your existence and that it is likely to continue based on your current state of existence. And, sometimes they hint that it's on you to set goals and invest in yourself by saying "You get out of it what you put into it" without fully pointing out any disclaimers in their paperwork which you should consider the entirety of any contract when dealing with frauds, just know the disclaimer is all that matters to them even if not to you or the courts where some are prima facie evidence of fraud as a stand alone depending on disclaimer language.

And, start with setting a feasible goal for yourself and achieving that rather than trying to wish your way or demand with tantrums your way into your perfect vision for your own future. The more you prove to yourself that you can achieve through your own hard work, the more you will know it is possible. But, the proof of your merit is all up to you and will be recognized by others too where not an illusion based on vice and deceit.

And, if like me you are so altruistic that it appears to sabotage other areas of your life and may need to adjust to find the right balance so some areas aren't compensating for any other neglected areas. My commitments are all reinforced and I hope God likes this sermon and gets that day of rest we've all heard about but can't imagine if those two days are days when the most believers attempt to bend his proverbial ear. Regardless, Jesus was all for helping out those in need regardless of day of the week and if you haven't started doing so, why not now?

I do find prayer and meditation helpful and sometimes find an idea for a solution I attribute to being inspired by Truth and Virtue in contemplation. But, I then add the cinnamon to the muffin mix or whatever if that's what I was contemplating as an example. "How can I improve this muffin mix?" Inspirational thought: "Maybe I'll add cinnamon." Action: Added the cinnamon and it was better. See? Don't get stuck on the contemplation, for best results manifest Truth and Virtue materially by being honest and virtuous in word and deed. And, wishing is fun too, but, don't expect anything to come of it without your participation.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <http://www.churchofphilosophicalexploration.church/feedback.htm>. For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

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