

“God helps those who help themselves.”

A decade ago, the Barna group took a poll; 53% of Americans agreed that this was taught in the Bible. 68% of “Born Again” Christians agreed that this was in the Bible. And 81% of all other Christians agreed. 75% of American teenagers believed it was the central message of the Bible.

On an episode of the *Tonight Show*, host Jay Leno asked random people on the street to name one of the 10 Commandments. The most popular response was “God helps those who help themselves.”

This phrase entered American minds through Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanack* in 1736. Useful, but certainly not the Bible.

Historians attribute this sentence to an English political writer named Algernon Sydney. It is found in his text *Discourses Concerning Government* ... which spoke out against an absolute monarchy ... and for which he was beheaded for treason in 1683.

And while variants on the phrase “God helps those who help themselves” exists in Greek philosophical writings and are alluded to in some ancient parables as well as the Koran ...

The bottom line is ... and for the record ... “God helps those who help themselves” is ... not ... found ... anywhere ... in ... the ... Bible.

In fact, looking at what we find in today’s readings, we see the exact opposite.

The first reading from the Prophet Amos speaks out against those people in his time who saw such things as the religious feasts, the Sabbath, and simple honesty ... not to mention respecting the dignity of other human beings ... as ... well ... obstacles to their particular business interests.

And in the Gospel, we hear of the parable of the Dishonest Steward ... who is fired for embezzling from his master ... and even after he is fired ... continues to abuse his position for his own advantage.

Strangely, his master praises him ... I suppose that this can be written off as “honor among thieves” in one sense ... but it should make it clear

that the perception and judgement of the world are most certainly not the same as how God would judge. Nor should it be part of how we view things, either.

Yet, where does this leave us?

Most certainly, we must look within ourselves and make certain that we are living up to our Christian calling. We can't just pick-and-choose between a little bit of what Jesus says and the rest from what the world says. Rather, we need to focus our minds and hearts on Jesus Christ ... and relying on His Grace, do our best to live ... as St. Paul tells us ...

*a quiet and tranquil life
in all devotion and dignity*

... a life ...

that is good and pleasing to God our savior

And as for the world? What are we to do?

St. Paul further explains that God

*wills [that] everyone ... be saved
and to come to knowledge of the truth.*

As our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has made clear - it is not our role to point the finger at others or to judge others ... but rather through our prayers and our example ... to show forth God's love and mercy ... making known to others ... through our lives ... the Truth of the Gospel ... and the transforming effects of redemption in Jesus Christ.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray that we might lay aside any worldly aspects that have invaded our hearts ... may we set aside things which are not of God ... and are not from Jesus ... He Who is our Way, our Truth, and our Life ... so that we might be more fully committed to our mission in Christ ... and as we go forth from this place ... that we might be a light to the world ... beacons of God's mercy ... living examples of God's love ... and messengers of the Good News of salvation ... out-and-about ... in the world.