Prayer

by Larry Strattner

After we talked, Marlene goes into her room and closes the door. I hear her hushed voice, rising and falling with inflection. She is praying. Before Marlene I never knew anyone who prayed; or at least who prayed and didn't care that other people knew they prayed.

Prayer has always interested me. It makes me think of questions like, ‘Who does one pray to and why?' ‘Can various prayers be answered by various beings who hear them?' ‘Are any individual prayers or direction of same more effective than others?'

Most people can't answer even one of these questions in a statement making sense. Fewer can state the shape or content of a prayer in a way that, if you heard it, would make you believe there is efficacy in prayer.

You need sincerity and trust and belief. Who has those? I don't. Marlene seems to. Martin Luther said, “The fewer the words the better prayer.”

So it's all in the heart and the heat and commitment. Praying isn't easy and I'll hazard a guess none of us do it enough to do it well. I think the kids from the forest have good prayers in them. They have the sincerity and uncomplicated love and joy. Maybe they'll learn to pray and someone will hear them and answer. While we work on that we'll drive our nails straight, saw our boards straight, and live our lives straight. Prayer is an effort of will; the acid test of devotion, the GPS leading us home.

“Hey,” I say to Marlene when she comes out of her room, “How about teaching me a few of the things you say, to whoever you say them to when you pray. Maybe I'll get to be a better person.”

“Don't worry about it. You're already a pretty good person. How good a person do you need to be? I like you a little bit on the not-so-good side.”

Exhausted by things metaphysical I go to bed.

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