

When I was a small child, our nation was going through the WWJD fad. For those that aren't aware, WWJD means "What would Jesus do?" It was on billboards, t-shirts, bracelets, bumper stickers. You literally couldn't go anywhere without seeing it in some form or another. Sure enough, though, people started altering what the letters stood for. A number of truck drivers changed it to "What would Jesus drive." Bars changed it to "What would Jesus drink." I can remember going into a AAA with one of my parents and someone had on a shirt that said "Where would Jesus drive." Though the fad seems to have died down, you still see WWJD every now and then, and I'm kind of happy it's still around. I say that because it, like the reading today, makes you question your decisions, your word choices, our very thoughts and ideas.

Today's reading starts off with Jesus saying he will return and he will repay us "according to everyone's work." On a certain level it sounds like we're all going to be put on trial for all the little things we've done, both in the public and private sectors. Unfortunately, many have used such passages as this to scare people into following their particular set of beliefs, lest they "burn in the lake of fire." Passages like this are misunderstood, making people think they need to be these high and mighty, perfect persons. Much like the WWJD movement, though, it's meant as a means of helping us to self-reflect and to turn back towards God's desired end. If you lie a lot, work on being more truthful, not just with others but potentially with yourself as well. If you swear a lot, try to think of less-colorful language. If you kick your lawnmower or car when it malfunctions, try swearing at it instead. It will save you in medical bills. In all seriousness though, we can all use a little refresher on how to be better Christians and how to do more Christian works.

Now, what do I mean when I say "Christian works?" People hear that and they think it means building orphanages, selling all your possessions to give the profits to the church, other grandiose actions. Just like Christ doesn't expect us to be these upstanding, model citizens, I'm not talking about these overly-heroic acts shown in movies and TV programs. One example of something that would count as a "Christian work" is something we do every Sunday: confession. In confessing our sins, we not only are being open and honest with God about our imperfection and our need for God's presence in our lives, but we're being honest with ourselves. Confession causes us to do the self-reflection Jesus is talking about in that first set of verses today. It causes us to realize for our own sake how we can improve and to take the first step towards actually being a better person.

A second means of doing "Christian works" is thanksgiving. The sun and the rain, our friends and families, the food we eat, the homes we have, everything we have and experience with at least one of our senses is from God. That in turn means we have so much to thank God for, and simply thanking God for all the blessings we have had in a single day not only is the courteous thing to do, but it again helps us to self-reflect. Through it, we are humbled to realize just how much is from God, just how much God blesses us, just how much we owe to God.

A third example, of course, is helping the needy. Donating unneeded clothes, linens, furniture, etc.; helping out at the local soup kitchen; mowing, raking, and shoveling for those that can't get around as easily; and that's only the tip of the iceberg. We have been given so much, making it only sensible that we give back that which we don't need. This action of giving back gives us a means of self-reflecting on our blessings and to know what it is we can thank God for.

Notice the common factors between them: they all involve self-reflection, and they're not overly-complicated/overly-sacrificial of time/energy/money. The first two are forms of prayer that occupy 5-10 minutes of a person's day, and the third is something that we all can do in one way or another. We are not called to, as Children of God, do superhuman feats. However, we

are called to not take our salvation lightly. I know that some of you are aware of our Presbyterian belief of salvation by grace, meaning that it's been given to us out of God's love for us, not out of our having earned it. Now, this passage by no means threatens to take it away should we have abused it, but we are nonetheless called to not take this grace lightly. We have been given so much, and we must show our thankfulness for it. So long as you have not abused your gift of salvation, you're good. Plus, if ever you're in question, simply ask "What would Jesus do?"