

Collect of the Day

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



St. Matthew's Cathedral eNews

Christ + Compassion + Community

From the Dean

From Atheism to Faith

[Jesus] also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed. . ." Mark 4:31

You never know. You know what I mean? You never know what you say or do will have an impact on someone.

Have you ever had someone come up to you and tell you, "You may not remember this, but I remember one time you told me _____, and it has had such an impact on my life. Thank you"?

Peter Hitchens, the brother of celebrated atheist Christopher Hitchens, wrote a book a couple of years ago called *Rage Against God*. In the book he recounts how he grew up in a household that cherished all the latest scientific biases of his age that led him to disbelieve in God. In the book he relates what a feeling of euphoria he had when in the playground of a Cambridge boarding house he put fire to the Bible that was given him at his baptism, this Bible that was all marked up and with notes. He felt so gloriously liberated at his destruction of this sacred book. It shocked his classmates, and he was proud of himself.

So, how did this proud atheist—as proud as his equally liberated brother Christopher—come to faith in Christ? Reading the book will not tell you exactly how it happened. He just tells the reader that somehow it happened.

Peter does give hints: a Christmas Eve service came at the right time for him.

At around the same time I rediscovered Christmas, which I had pretended to dislike for many years. I slipped into a carol service on a winter evening, diffident and anxious not to be seen.

I knew perfectly well that I was enjoying it, although I was unwilling to admit it. I also knew I was losing my faith in politics and my trust in ambition, and was urgently in need of something else on which to build the rest of my life.

When Christopher was dying with terminal cancer, an interviewer asked him, on a scale of 1 to 7 how sure was he that there was no God. He said, "6." He said that he had received lots of cards, particularly from Christians who said they were praying for him. He was quite touched, and grateful for the prayers and expressions of support, but the one that really gave him pause was a card with a quote from Huston Smith: "Lack of proof of the existence of God is not the same thing as proof in the non-existence of God."

We never know what little mustard seed will turn into faith in someone else. It might be from inviting a friend to the Christmas Eve service, or to an Easter service, or inviting a couple to consider getting married in your church, or even simply praying for someone. God is in the small things.