
From Sam Candler's Sermon On Sunday "The Church Has Problems"

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,
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, I want to make a confession today. I want to acknowledge something that folks have said about churches for a long time: "The church has problems." They are right. And this Cathedral of St. Philip has problems.

And do you know why the church has problems?

Because we bring them here! We're the ones who bring problems here. So, actually, I believe the church is supposed to have problems!

We gather all sorts of sin here. Look out among our community this morning, or this afternoon. We are full of sin. Some of us have stolen in the past week. As much as I want to ignore it, there are some here who have committed adultery. Some of us have lied. Every one of us has coveted something. And I suspect that every one of us has forgotten at some point who the only God is.

We have problems, just like those that the common pilgrim brought to the Jerusalem temple years ago. And the church (this Cathedral!) is supposed to have problems.

, Jesus objected to the moneychangers and the traders [in the temple] because they did not accept the offerings of the common folk. That child of God had labored hard and traveled far to make a simple offering to God. When he got to the temple, when he got to the institutional church, that institution said, "Your offering is not quite good enough. You need a special coin. You need an unblemished offering."

The sin of institutional religion is not accepting the simple and authentic offering of the people. True religion is supposed to accept us, even if we are imperfect and blemished. In fact, true religion is supposed to accept us especially if we are imperfect and blemished, especially if we have problems.

, One of the most important things we Christians do is accept the offerings of others. It may be posting the crayon picture from our child on the refrigerator door, listening to a poem from our spouse, taking the stranger into our community.

There is no offering that God cannot accept. There is no offering that God cannot use. Sure, God uses the glorious and glittering offerings. But God also uses the imperfect and blemished offerings. God even uses the sin offerings.

Because God would rather he have our sin than have us keep it. Each one of us needs to give God our best, but each one of us needs to give God our worst, too.

The Body of Christ can handle those offerings. We don't need moneychangers and traders. The Body of Christ can handle whatever we give, and whoever we are. Because the Body of Christ is a body of redemption and forgiveness. Destroy the walls that keep out the poor, the walls that keep out the pilgrim and the child of God. Destroy the walls of self-

righteousness. Destroy the walls of death and emptiness.

And God will raise up, in us, a new body of life and resurrection power.

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler