

Sermon – October 6, 2019

Faith

Crown of Life Lutheran Church, Rigby, ID

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Today's lesson is on Faith, one of the Three Solas – Faith, Scripture, Grace – nothing embodies all three like one single verse in the Bible John 3-16

Reaching the end of a job interview, a human resources person asked a young engineer fresh out of MIT what kind of a salary he was looking for.

"In the neighborhood of \$140,000 a year, depending on the benefits package."

"Well, what would you say to a package of 5-weeks of vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical & dental, company matching retirement fund to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every 2 years ... say, a red Corvette?"

"Wow! Are you kidding?"

"Yes, but you started it."

The idea is that God's people must develop a servant heart, if they are to mature in their faith. With faith in our lives, our eyes should always be open and fixed on Him.

Please pray with me...

"O Lord, speak in this place, in our minds, in our hearts, by the words of my mouth, and in the thoughts we form. Speak, O Lord, we, your servants, are listening. Amen."

FAITH

There is a legend of a small town in which there were no liquor stores or nightclubs. Eventually, however, a nightclub was built right on Main Street. One of the churches, in the area, was so disturbed that they conducted several all-night prayer meetings, and asked the Lord to burn down the nightclub.

Lightning struck the nightclub a short time later, and it was completely destroyed by fire. The owner, knowing how the believers had prayed, sued the church for the damages.

His attorney claimed that their prayers had caused the lightning and fire. While the church people hired a lawyer, and claimed that their prayers did not cause the lightning and fire.

During the trial the judge declared, "It's the opinion of this court that the owner of the nightclub is the one who really believes in prayer, while the church members do not!"

Here is a situation where people who don't have faith found God to be faithful! And yet, those who claim to have faith really don't have much faith.

I wonder if this is a fair example of how faith is exercised by some people within the church.

In today's Gospel lesson, the disciples ask Jesus to increase their faith, and He responds...

"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." Luke 17:6

Then, Jesus begins to speak about a servant doing his duty.

One is to do his or her duty ... while not seeking praise or glory. He tells the disciples - you are doing what is expected of you ... no more and no less.

It seems to me, our duty is to live by faith in Christ Jesus, and to perform that duty each and every day. We are not to expect praise or glory from God.

Living a Christian Life is what is expected of those who have been saved through Christ Jesus. It is our response to His love for us. As we daily make choices and decisions, we need to be thinking, "I am a Christian. It is what I do". It's who I am in Christ Jesus. It's how I live my life.

So How do we unravel all of Jesus' teaching this morning? I would like to start by sharing a poem (written by Edgar Guest as found in "Doing the Gospel.") Edgar Guest was an American poet who was popular in the first half of the 20th century and was known as the People's Poet.

I invite you to keep these words in mind during the rest of the message because they are a key to a better understanding of our text from Luke.

Poem Title: "I would rather see a sermon than to hear one any day:

*"I would rather see a sermon than to hear one any day...
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way...*

*The best of all the preachers are the ones who live their creed...
For to see good put to action, is what everybody needs.*

*I soon can learn to do it, if you'll let me see it done...
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue, too fast may run.*

*And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true...
But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do.*

*For I might misunderstand you, and the high advice you give...
But there's no misunderstanding how you act, and how you live.*

*When I see a deed of kindness, I am eager to be kind...
When a weaker brother stumbles and a strong man stays behind.*

*And all travelers can witness, that the best of guides today...
Is not the one who tells them, but the one who shows the way.*

*Who stands with men of honor, learns to hold his honor dear...
For right living speaks a language, which to everyone is clear.*

Though an able speaker charms with his eloquence...

I say I would rather see a sermon than to hear one, any day."

I took the time to share this poem with you today because it spoke to me, AND I believe it speaks clearly about our text.

"I would rather see a sermon, than to hear one, any day."

The followers of the Christ must not only talk the talk, but they must walk the walk. That is what Jesus is saying when he speaks about duty.

We have a duty to be faithful to Him in our daily life ... not just speak about Christ, but actually live in Christ.

Are you living in Christ today? Are you producing the fruit of the Spirit? Are you overflowing with Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-control?

If you AREN'T, wouldn't you at least agree that you should be?!

Jesus is proclaiming to us how faith is applied in service to others ... daily.

And a servant's task, a servant's duty is never done. The word servant used here ... is describing ... you and me.

If a servant (you or I) thinks that he or she has a compliment coming from God, or from others, for this work, they are mistaken. A servant only does what is expected.

If the disciples wanted to ask for an increase of anything, it should not have been faith, but the energy to apply the gift of faith to the world around them.

So regardless of how much we do, we cannot do more than what is expected of us.

Hear me on this ... we cannot do more than what is expected of us.

God's blessing is a matter of grace – it cannot be earned.

When we assume that we can deal with God on the basis of what God owes us, then we have made a big mistake.

In essence, we have rejected grace as the basis of our relationship with God, and have based that relationship now on our own worth and merit.

Grace is, and always will be, a free gift ... a free gift from God.

Jesus is saying that kingdom people are expected to serve others, to worship God, to fulfill the two great commandments He gave us as His Kingdom people...

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Luke 10:27

Obviously, that is what Jesus expects from us. We cannot do more than What is expected of us.

And here is how it works ... God acts, we respond.

I would rather see a Sermon, then to hear one any day.

And this response is possible. How? Through a strong and vibrant faith life. This response is nothing more than what Martin Luther and other theologians call sanctification, which means growing spiritually ... being transformed into the image of Christ ... being made holy.

Life in Christ is not static, but alive, changing, and growing. Salvation is assured, but how we live with that assurance of salvation is the challenging part of our Christian journey.

Salvation is God's work alone, but sanctification, living and growing in God's love, requires us to be disciples of the Lord. It requires an effort.

I am not talking here about doing works to help your relationship with God ... to help earn your salvation. We all know that is not possible for our salvation comes from God's Grace alone.

Here I am talking about giving your all in an effort to let the Holy Spirit work in your life, and transform you into the Kingdom People Christ wants you to be.

Remember these words from our servant recognition services that we occasionally have at Crown of Life, where I say, "If you agree, then say, "I will with the help of God."

So now, I am going to ask you some questions, and if you agree, then you say, " I will with the help of God."

First, "Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?" (response)

"Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbor as yourself?" (response)

"Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every person?" (response)

We are to proclaim by both speaking and living our lives in Christ; we are to Seek and Serve, which is accomplished by striving.

So, as you can see, I am not talking here about works, but EFFORTS ... efforts to be the best disciple of Jesus Christ that you can be!

Paul shares with us in Ephesians ...

"...speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." Ephesians 4:15

We are called as kingdom people to set an example, not for a reward, not for a praise, but as a response to God's saving grace in our lives.

And as we live out this response to God's grace, that is when we experience peace ... a glorious peace that only God can deliver and sustain.

Let me share this story of true peace with you. It is entitled "When the Wind Blows".

A young man applied for a job as a farmhand. When the farmer asked for his qualifications, he said, "I can sleep when the wind blows." This puzzled the farmer. But he liked the young man, and so he hired him.

A few days later, the farmer and his wife were awakened in the night by a violent storm. They quickly began to check things out to see if all was secure. They found that the shutters on the farmhouse had been securely fastened. A good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace.

The young man slept soundly.

The farmer and his wife then inspected the rest of the property. They found that the farm tools had been placed in the storage shed, safe from the elements.

The tractor had been moved into the barn. And the barn was properly locked. Even the animals were calm. All was well.

Only then did the farmer understand the meaning of the young man's words, "I can sleep when the wind blows."

Because the farmhand did his work loyally and faithfully when the skies were clear, he was prepared for the storm when it came. And ... he could sleep in peace.

There was nothing dramatic or sensational in the young farmhand's preparations. He just faithfully did what was needed each day.

Consequently, peace was his, even when the winds blow ... even when the storms of life come.

It isn't the things you do; it is the things you leave undone, which will give you heartache.

At the setting of the sun, what are you leaving undone? Those who know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, can surely sleep when the wind blows ... for their salvation is assured.

We live for Christ, and do his will. Not for reward, not for praise, not for gain ... but because we love God, which also means we must love our neighbors as ourselves.

I would rather see a sermon, then to hear one any day!

Jesus says this at the end of our text for today...

"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" Luke 17:10

Have you done what you ought to have done? Have you done your duty?

When Leonardo da Vinci was a boy, he saw caged birds for sale on the streets of Florence. He would buy them, and set them free. It was a rare trait in a young boy, and spoke of a heart full of genuine sympathy.

As we wander down the streets of life, we too may find some people who are spiritually caged,

who we can help set free.

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Naturalists say that a stork will sail under their young when they first attempt to fly, and, if they begin to fall, will bear them up and support them.

Then, even when a stork is wounded by a sportsman, the able ones gather about it, put their wings under it, and try to carry it away. These instincts in the birds teaches us a lesson.

We should come up close to those who are troubled, weak, or faint. And we should put our own strength underneath them to support them.

And when others are wounded or crushed, whether by trouble or by sin, it is our duty, it is our privilege to gather about them, and through the power of Christ, lift them ... restore them.

Our lives ... may be the only Sermon that those around us will ever see.

Show Grace to the world around you, to those that God sends into your life, and make your life a living sermon.

"I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day."

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts, minds and faith in Christ Jesus.

Amen.