

Sunday, October 2, 2016

Lamentations 3:19-26

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Luke 17:5-10

Building on the Small Seed of Faith

Michelangelo the great sculptor was working with a large block of white marble and as he worked he attracted a large crowd of spectators. A little girl was watching with deep fascination by the sight of the small marble chips and the mallet and chisel. The little girl was in awe of the sculptor and inquired, "What are you making?" he replied, "there is an angel in there and I must set it free." Michelangelo had a vision of what he was going to create with hammer and chisel and he just needed to get the extra marble out of the way.

Each one of us at some time in our life was offered something similar—although it is not a huge piece of marble in which to sculpt a statue like Michelangelo, it is something more important. It is called questioning one's life and discovering who you are and who you are not. Simply put it is faith. And faith is a choice.

Some people who at some point in their lives have indicated that there is no place in their life for God as they have no interest. They have never heard God's call, felt the vacuum in their lives or reached out to One who stands beyond them. Others appear to have begun the journey and then to have abandoned it and still others grasp on to the One whom they have heard about since childhood and continue to grow in faith. Some people's faith is strong and powerful—while others have an innocent faith like a child. Yet no matter where we are as individuals our faith journey is that—ours.

Just reflect for a moment about your life. Maybe it was your parents or grandparents who showed you how to pray as a toddler. Paul notes that Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice had a sincere faith which lived in them and was shared with him. As a young boy Timothy was taught about God and his love. And Paul writes to Timothy and says – build on this faith; for Timothy has received a spirit of power, love and self-discipline.

Maybe when you were younger you were taught the essential stories about what it means to be Christian. To know how Jesus' birth is celebrated at Christmas, Jesus' death and resurrection at Easter and all the stories of how Jesus interacted with real people during the time he lived on earth and how he taught us how to live loving others as God loves us. And now you are wondering about your relationship with Jesus—what does it mean to live a faithful life in Christ? Is it a life of fear, disillusionment or confusion, or does living faithfully mean never being alone or afraid again?

But how do we describe faith?

In our reading from Luke 17 we understand that Jesus has been teaching his disciples and they have been learning about sin, and duty and forgiveness. Jesus has told them that if someone sins against them many times even in the same day, after they tell them what they have done and admit these sins, they are to be forgiven. The response of the disciples was an

exclamation of wonder and a request. They asked Jesus, “Increase our faith.” But Jesus states that even if the quantity of faith we have is minute like the size of a mustard seed, we can do many things—like move a mulberry tree by uprooting and planting it in the sea.

And to have faith means to truly understand oneself in relationship to the possibilities placed before us. Last week I spoke about how trusting and hoping in God is interdependent but I would like to add that having faith in the one whom we trust and have hope beyond this life more than completes the circle of intra-dependency. We need to have faith to move us to build our trust and to have hope. But all interact and both support and challenge the other.

Jesus continues his teaching and describes a typical farm scene where a servant is plowing or looking after the sheep. Would the farmer call to the servant to come in, sit down and eat supper? No most likely, the farmer would tell the servant to prepare his supper, wait on him and then after he finished eating the servant could eat. Would the farmer thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? No- because serving the farmer is what he is supposed to do.

What is Jesus saying in this story? We are to have faith. Even if we think we don’t have enough—we are to keep that faith in front of us and be challenged each day to grow. God has given us all the faith we need to serve Him, to live our lives as we should. And that’s all we have to do- do our duty. Be faithful and live like we are supposed to. It doesn't take a supersize scoop of faith—only a little faith lived out—only a little faithfulness.

But what about your faith journey is deceptively simple and at the same time highly complex. Our faith is life itself because it may begin when we become curious enough about Jesus and want to learn more about the Son of God as a child. Or it may only start when as an adult a crisis or life changing experience calls us to understand more about this man, this God, the Saviour and who He is for each of us.

But what is faith? Faith is a verb action that is the something, dynamic that drives or gives life to the relationship between us and God. Our faith is our recognition that God is God and that each of us is special. Having faith means that we are most full human when we acknowledge and accept God as God in our lives. And it is this acknowledgement of God in our lives that says we are faithful people.

The good news about faith is= you already have enough.. You have enough faith to be faithful. You don’t have to demonstrate tree-throwing faith, or even have spiritual superhero faith to serve God. You have all the faith you need to be faithful. You just need to trust God, have hope in Christ and live.

As we gather around this table today let us lift our faith to Christ- he knows who you are and where you are on your journey of faith. You don’t need super amounts of faith to live a faithful life, but you need only trust Jesus alone to keep you because He has entrusted you with the hope and promise of eternal life.

On this Worldwide Communion Sunday, our brothers and sisters around the world will come together and eat and drink as we will in a few minutes. It is interesting that at this table Jesus has done it all.

Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it and through our faith—He still offers it to us.

Jesus took the cup, blessed it, poured it out to share with others – and through faith- He still offers it to us.

Jesus does what we could not do for ourselves by becoming and offering himself as the Sacrifice for reconciliation with God that we each needed.

He gives us all we need, including faith, to be faithful to him. Are we ready? Do you have faith in Christ who offers this bread and juice? As we come to this table today, let us examine our hearts. Even if we have done everything we were supposed to do—including forgiving others and ourselves, we are still doing what servants do. Do you have faith in Christ?

Look to the empty cross—he has taken your guilt away, he has forgiven you and he gives you the strength you need each day.

Come together as our brothers and sisters around the world are sharing in this sacred moment. Come so that you may be strengthened and that your faith will be renewed as you trust in Christ and have hope for all your tomorrows.

Keep the Faith in all you do.

FORSAKING ALL I TRUST HIM

PRAYER

Wonderful God, enable us to have faith and to serve beyond what is our duty. Meet us at the table and open our hearts to be renewed to serve and to love others in Christ's name. Hear us we pray. Amen.