

SUNDAY, June 16, 2024 “Walk by Faith Not Sight”

I Samuel 15:34-16:13, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17 Mark 4:26-34

It was not that long ago when travelling north that we were crossing over the Mackinac Bridge which joins Lower and Upper Michigan peninsulas where the idea of walking in faith became clear. This was because the fog was so thick, all that was seen was the road ahead for about 10-12 feet. That is not far but when one cannot see the huge towers which holds up the bridge nor the beautiful islands and inlets of this amazing part of region, it can be a little nerve racking or even scary. One might even call it a white knuckle ride as you are holding on to the steering wheel very tightly fearful of what is to come. It is a long bridge of 5 miles so as one drives you just keep going straight and know that at the other end is approach to land again. This is driving by faith and being encouraged to just go slowly a little bit at a time.

Our readings today remind us of what is important to us as individuals who are in need of growing in faith and to have that confidence in faith knowing that we have an eternal perspective. Not just 12 feet down the road, but that our eternal life involves have a strong faith in Christ Jesus and living according to his teachings. It means walking and living faithful lives according to God's commandments, and Jesus' teachings in love..

If only Samuel had experienced this notion! Our reading from I Samuel occurs after the people of Israel accepted Saul as their king but the only problem is that Saul does not walk by faith. And in fact, he turned away from God and did not carry out his commands. 1Sam.15:35 states, “The lord was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel.” Saul failed to see the bigger picture of what God had planned for His people and did not follow his laws. God was disappointed in him. Saul did not walk by faith in God but only saw the short term results of battles; he did not fully trust God to lead the people of Israel as was needed.

What about you? Are you walking by faith? Or are your eyes tired from taking in all the visual input and you are acting or reacting to what you see? Just think about what you might see and experience from the moment you awake—whether it is input from tv, phones, or even the person walking in front of your home. Not to mention the sun, clouds, moon, stars and what you see that is far away. We often hear stories of what people have done wrong on the news and there is a part of us that wants to know more and to watch and this is what entices us to watch further or read more. Our eyes read/see what is before us but we do not always understand what is there. We may see the words, but we do not focus.

Even Adam and Eve focused on what they could see as they lived in the Garden of Eden rather than what God said. And it is this strategy of deception that Satan or the evil one has used successfully on humanity since then. People walking by sight is an extensive pursuit because it is easy to see anything when you open your eyes. For example, one can see the moon, the sun and stars which are far away. But to use the other senses of taste, smell and feel this may only be done within a short distance too close to one's body. One can hear from a larger space but how small is the distance in comparison to seeing the moon.

When we look at the world we need only remember that it is a speck within God's creation. So by sight we take knowledge of the visible world, close up and far away and from this perspective we often lose 'sight' of what God intends for us. That is, we are influenced by what we see. But what Paul writes is in contrast to this, walking by faith means having an eternal perspective, so that we can feel at home in both worlds (2 Cor. 5:6-8). Walking by faith means fixing our eyes on what is eternal for our lives. I: "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor.

Walking by faith means living in a way that shows we confidently believe in God's promises, and this pleases God. It means we do not just read passages of the Bible for comfort or reassurance, but we trust them enough to change our daily decisions at work, at school, and in our relationships based on what they say. Walking by faith means living in a way that shows we confidently believe in God's promises, and this pleases God. But what are the promises of God? These are those matters which enable us to trust the passages of the Bible to enable us to change our daily decisions at work, at school, and in our relationships based on what they say. We may read God's word for comfort or reassurance, but we must also trust the Spirit to inspire and move us to walk by faith.

And this is difficult to do because we cannot fully understand the mystery and wonder of growing and growing up in faith. Jesus teaches us this in the parable of the growing seed as he describes the kingdom of God. Just what is the kingdom of God? Jesus states that if one scatters seed on the ground, sleeps and then rises night and day, the seed sprouts and grows. The earth in conjunction with the seed, the moisture, the heat from the sun combine and then the seed germinates itself. Eventually there is a stalk, and the head. In time, when the grain is ripe the person then prepares to harvest the grain for it is ready for consumption. The kingdom in this story is how we grow and walk in faith.

It seems we don't always follow this plan—we receive the knowledge of God as children—maybe; we may even be taught some stories of Jesus especially Christmas and Easter focused, and we might even hear about Jesus' teachings. But if the Spirit is mentioned it is not usually appealing to people until hearts are open to receive the message. When this occurs, there is a growth spurt per se; and individuals seek a little more knowledge about God. But it takes time—a life time.

As odd as it may sound, it's very easy to try to live the Christian life without faith, relying on our religious behavior more than our confident belief in God's promises. Most of the time, we don't even realize we are doing it, and that's why we need to reflect regularly on what it means to walk by faith and whether we are truly doing it.

How does one measure or understand our walking in faith? Or whether one has enough in the kingdom of God? Again Jesus teaches this as he shares the parable of the mustard seed. With what can we compare the kingdom of God? It is like a mustard seed which when sown is the smallest of all seeds on earth. But when it grows up and becomes a shrub, it has large branches so that birds of the air can make nests in its shade. The seed becomes a shrub which supports other forms of life. The question needing to be asked is whether we are willing to have faith like the seed to be able to grow in God. That is, are we willing to rely on, or put our trust in, God's grace? Wherever we are, we are accountable to God, and to one another, for what we do in our bodies, whether good or evil. God's grace is sufficient to give us the power to please God in all circumstances.

As we read in vs 16, “from now on, therefore, we regard no one according to a human point of view even though we once regarded Christ as human, we can no longer regard him this way.” This is because we see Christ and those around us with new eyes. This is because we are a “new creation” in Christ. And by this we see others, and even ourselves, with a new sense of what truly matters. It is seeing others with a new lens or perspective, it is seeing yourself in accordance with the truth.

How much of our struggle in this life is because we fail to see our friend, our spouse, our child, our boss, or brother or sister in light of the truth, instead of worldly lies about who they should be or who we think we need them to be? How much of your struggle in this life flows from judging yourself according to the flesh and not the love, acceptance, and grace of God; of seeing yourself as He sees you, and not who you think you need to be according to your parents, spouse, friends, or even the media.

Paul reminds us that at one time, Jesus was an option, not a necessity. At one time, according to the flesh, Jesus was not Lord but we made ourselves to be the one in charge! Yet now that has changed. Everything becomes new!

So the question of walking or living in faith is not just something we do for a short time in our life on earth; it is a commitment to live as God intends for us. It is a choice that allows our hearts to be open to receive the Spirit. It is a way of living love as Jesus taught and it is our way of seeing a glimpse of what God's kingdom will be like.

Do you walk in faith or by does what you see influence you more? Are you living with the Spirit guiding you or are you seeing Jesus as the co-pilot? Or do you trust and follow God's way for your life. SONG as Closing Prayer!

1 When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way!

While we do his good will, he abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus,

but to trust and obey.