

9<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost Sermon  
August 6/7, 2022

Are you prepared? There is a difference between those who walk by faith and those who practice religion without faith. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. What is your hope? Is it in this world? Our Lord has told us that heaven and earth will pass away, but that His word abides forever. Is Your hope in His word?

If we just give lip service to the Lord, but our hearts are far from Him, what use is that? It is playing a game of pretend. We do that with ourselves and one another. We like to pretend by projecting a good presentation of ourselves. But what is the truth? Has not Christ come to save us? From what? From whatever would keep us from being with the Lord forever. I sometimes think we have made the idea of Christianity too easy. So easy, in fact, that there are many who do not bother with the easy part of being a part of a fellowship in order to be held accountable to what Christ demands.

Think about this for a few moments. Yes, we can watch the service from afar in the comfort of our home. We do not have to bother with gathering together, as is the habit of some. Now, if we see being a part of a fellowship and participating in worship as our good deeds, they can be replaced with other good deeds in our mind. Across our land, there are those who seem to think in terms of living faith along this path. But is it faith? Only God knows the heart, so we need to walk carefully here. If Christ is going to plant His image in us and make us fellow heirs with Him, then there is much that needs to be done. In one sense, we are each on the path alone with Christ. On the other hand, He has brought us together as His body in this place. It appears that Christ intends both. We are assured by Him that when two or more are gathered in His name, He is with us. He intends to work through the local fellowship, so sitting at home and thinking social media is the church seems to crash into the reality of what Christ has done and is doing (And we are to respect those who cannot as opposed to those who will not).

Faith is also the conviction of things not seen. We have the conviction that the local fellowship is the place where Christ does what He does to build up the saints. We also have the conviction that when Christ saves us, He will prepare us to be in His presence, in the presence of Trinity forever. We know that God is holy and that to be in His presence requires holiness. Christ places His holiness upon those who believe and the way before the faithful is made possible. It is then upon us to step out in faith and walk the path the Lord sets before us. In this part, and this part only, it is a one on one walk with the Lord. But, He intends also that we walk together. That is why the local fellowship is so important. He has intended that we be His body which is made up of many parts.

So, we walk with evidence and conviction. I know that my Redeemer lives. At the end, when this body has been destroyed, returned to the dust from whence it was made, I, I myself shall see Him with my own eyes. I and not another, for I believe that He is coming and will resurrect us to be with Him where He is. The evidence is Christ's resurrection and the hope is that I shall be united with Him. Understanding this, we begin by being united with Him in this age of death. There is suffering all around us. We suffer. Our Lord has told us that we will drink from the cup of suffering. So, our faith cannot be the conditional religion that some seem to display. You know, if I like it I will grace you with my presence. Instead, we are called to live lives that seek to be conformed to Christ, His image, and walk knowing that He, and He alone, must be the author and finisher of our faith. With Him, all things are possible. Apart from Him, we can do nothing.

It is by His power and might that we have the gift of faith. We cannot even say that Jesus is Lord without the Holy Spirit giving us the ability to say so. The world may be in a mess – and it has been so across the ages – but our Savior has come in order that we may have true life and have it abundantly. He is life. He has come to give us His life. Hear Him as He reminds us to not be afraid.

How much of our culture causes us to be afraid. We live in a culture shrouded in fear. All things are in the Lord's hands. Everything will come to pass according to the Father's will. We are to seek the Father's will and, to the best of our ability, live the Father's will in our own lives. This is something we can and must do in order that we may remain faithful to the call which has been given us through Christ. We also are commanded by our Lord to be people of action. Some, it seems, take this to mean making battle plans. The battle belongs to the Lord. He is our Supreme Commander. To be ready for the battle we encounter each day is to be trained and prepared. This is why, in part, we are encouraged to spend time in prayer and reading Scripture. We are to be trained in the way of thinking the Lord will teach us if we spend the time with Him and under His direction. This too is why we gather together as His community in worship.

From last week, where we heard of the rich fool, we are reminded that we are stewards and everything belongs to the Lord. What are we to do with what He has entrusted to us? Do we really act as stewards, or as owners? This is a part of the struggle and obviously, with our Lord dealing so directly with this topic, we do well to heed the admonitions of our Savior. For this reason He tells us to sell our possessions. For some, this may be quite literal. At the least, it is to move from thinking that everything is ours to the place where we ask the Lord, "What would You have me do with what You have entrusted to me?" He says this and then immediately reminds us that our heart will be where what we treasure is located. If our heart is on the things of this world, we will defend what is ours. If our heart is in the Lord, then we will defend to the death that which belongs to the Lord.

If our heart is in the right place, then we are prepared to do the Lord's bidding. He bids us to be ready for action. Each day, there are opportunities, appointments, that the Lord makes for each one of us. Are we ready in season and out of season to do the Lord's bidding. Do we see church as an occasional thing, or that to which the Lord has united us together for His purpose? Ministry happens for each one of who are prepared to do the bidding of our Lord. Whether the random meeting of a stranger in the community, or counseling a friend, we are a part of this mysterious society we call the body of Christ. Our faith is not taught, but caught. Those who are in Christ have the good infection of the eternal life which He gives and for others who see His light shining through us, the infection is evident. If you are not living the faith, then one might question whether or not they have faith. It is not having action for its own sake, for that is moving by your own power. Nor is it just declaring that you have faith. For it to be faith, the hope must be based upon the solid rock, the foundation, our Savior, Jesus. For faith to be where our heart is, it must coincide with the action which emanates from the heart.

Our Lord has called you through the water of your baptism to come to Him and join with Him in a crusade against the forces of darkness which are all around. He is our strength. He has called for us to be prepared and be people of action. He will return to judge the living and the dead. He will hold all accountable for the faith they did or did not live. He is telling you beforehand so that You may be amongst those who are prepared. Are you prepared to meet Jesus? We may not know the time, but people of faith, He will come. Amen.