

15<sup>th</sup> Pentecost  
September 5, 2021

True faith trusts God no matter what. Loving the One who first loved us above all things is the journey we are on as we walk the gift of salvation. The world has many other prizes that are set before us, but which path will we take?

Through the ages, there are those who ponder what seems to the world rudeness on Jesus part? But then, do we not question God when something happens that we do not like? Lord, if you love me, why would you allow this to happen? Why indeed? I do not know. The real question when faced with such things is are we trusting the Lord.

A woman who was not an Israelite makes a request of the Lord. Jesus answers that it is not right to give food first to others. She responds with a statement of faith. It is as if she is saying, "I know that I am unworthy Lord, but even scraps from Your table would be welcomed." Jesus responds and I, for one, cannot help but think that Jesus is smiling as this exchange goes on. We do not know, but I see such grace pouring out of Jesus in this exchange. He pulls her firmly into faith. She gives a humble response to the Lord and He affirms her faith. Then – and see this clearly – she, in faith, trusts what the Lord has said. "You may go." Too often in this modern age, rather than trusting our Lord, we want some kind of proof. It seems as though we are constantly tempted to keep on testing the Lord. If our faith is conditional, we can never truly come to the place of simply faith guiding us through this life.

I make plans and things go awry. Did I first seek the Lord? Am I just after what I think is right? Am I trusting that Jesus knows exactly what is needed so that in this journey of becoming like Christ all that is needed will happen to prepare me to eternally dwell with Him and will happen according to the Father's will? This is important, for this also gets to the heart of the state of our faith. I confess that there are many places where I do not trust the Lord above all things. In this confession, there needs to be repentance and once again coming to Jesus humbly and confessing that I am unworthy, but I will take whatever scraps He tosses from His heavenly provision.

Under all of these things is the pride that keeps raising its ugly head. I am unworthy and so are you. This chafes me. I remember reading in my research a quickly assembled note that said, "After all I've done, after all I've sacrificed, after all I've learned, I can't be wrong." Yes, I can be wrong. Only our Savior walked in this life perfectly. Perfectly connected with the Father at all times and doing what the Father gave Him to do. He spoke only what the Father gave Him to speak. I would like to think I sometimes do this. But if it is only sometimes, then that means that at other times I am not speaking what the Father would have me speak. I always come back to the simple place that reminds me that I need to be saved. This is what Jesus came to do. He came to save you and me from sin, death, and evil.

The world chases after wealth and glory. What is that? It will all be left behind. Why is it that we listen to celebrities who may be good at their own craft, but are otherwise clueless when it comes to settling for the crumbs that fall from the table?

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and then all that is needed will be added. Scripture tells us plainly that a good name is to be cherished above riches. The favor of the Lord, who created all things, is better than gold or silver. How do we get there? Scripture is clear that the path is in learning how to be charitable and not taking from others. Faith, hope, and charity, these three are where love leads us.

Sadly, things have changed dramatically in the church. I think of the cathedral in the

cornfield. It is a parish built upon love for the Lord. In the early part of the twentieth century, the church was electrified before the surrounding farms. There was love for the Lord first and above other things. Alas, as the century unfolded, as has been true in many places, instead of loving the Lord first, it was hand-me-downs and leftovers. It was a reverse of the humility and the love of gold and silver has overtaken us. Now many look at their religion as being conditional. Lord, if You do this, give me that, have things the way I want them, I will give my allegiance. It is happening across our land and the unfaithful seem to be falling away. The Lord gives us unconditional love and He desires that we love Him unconditionally.

In the kingdom of heaven, there is no rank or privilege, only those who love the Lord and others as they love themselves. Those who trust the Lord dwell with Him and He with them. They are like an unmovable place where the winds of the world may swirl about, but they remain unmoved.

You see, in this story of Jesus and the woman, He shows us that He is showing no partiality. Jesus is unimpressed with the circumstances into which we were placed. Compared to those who want to flood into our nation – and think about this, if our nation is so bad, why do so many still want to come here? – we have been placed in this nation which affords us great privilege. In many places, Christians are being put to death for their faith. Pressed by inconvenience or any number of other things, people wander off. Too many seem to have a “Whatever” attitude towards the Lord. But you have been given the words of eternal life. Where else are you going to go? We may make excuse upon excuse, but it really does come down to willingly surrendering to the One who made us and placed us where we are.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus does do all things well. He has promised to make you and me new. Will the clay say to the potter how things are to be done and what the final shape is going to be? This is all a matter of faith. Will you journey on the path that learns to trust the Lord above all things? Do not look at those who seem to be saying with their actions, “No.” Terrified on what is happening around us, we often look no different than the world.

Let me ask you: are you blessed? Has God provided for you each day of your life? Have the faithful encouraged you to live by faith? Has all that You need for your salvation been provided for? The answer to all these questions and so many more is a resounding “Yes!” The second part is the difficult portion and that is living in faithfulness. If we, together, live in the charity and love that our Lord has invited us into, then we are a part of God’s provision for those who are not yet walking by faith. This is at the heart of what James was teaching. It is not a matter of what You do, but for whom you do it. If you are living for yourself, well then, that says all it needs to say. If you see yourself as a part of God’s creation, in His hands, living into the life He has given you in faith, that is quite a different matter.

We are called to live by faith in the One who has made our faith possible. We are called to obey all that He commands, knowing that all power and authority belongs to Jesus. We are not to focus upon what we are doing, but upon the One who calls us to live our lives each day in His grace and mercy. It is seeing that the true wealth is the love of the Lord and that all the wealth of this age is filthy nothingness. Tools. That all that money is in this age. It is not power, influence, self-indulgence, as so many seem to be using it. The Lord is the Lord of all. If He is Lord in your life, then turn to Him and be guided each step of the way in the incredible gift of faith that He has given you. Join with Jesus and be a part of the bride of Christ, the communion of saints which is being prepared for the weight of glory in the age to come. Live in such a way that your life is a thank you to Jesus for all that He does. Amen.