

July 16, 2017

God Has Great Confidence in Us

PRAYER

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

SERMON

Have you ever stopped to think about how much confidence God has in each and every one of us? God has so much confidence in us that he entrusts to us the future of the kingdom. He entrusts to ordinary people like you and me the extraordinary work of Jesus Christ. In baptism, we are called to be disciples. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. And we are called to let our light so shine before others so they see our good works and give glory to our Father in Heaven. In baptism, we are given an awesome responsibility. But for many of us, great responsibility is kind of scary. I don't think any of us in our right minds would really want to be the president of the United States. We just wouldn't want the responsibility that goes along with that office.

Back when Jimmy Carter was running for president, the press had a field day poking fun at his family especially his brother Billy. One day when the press made some kind of snide comments about Billy's foolish behavior. He had finally had enough. And he said you know my mother joined the Peace Corp when she was 68. One sister's a motorcycle freak, the other is a holy roller evangelist and my brother is running for president. I'm the only sane one in the family. (Laughter)

And great responsibility can be scary. And that's precisely what we are given in our baptisms. We are called to be disciples of Jesus. We are called to go into the world to be and make disciples for Christ. And sometimes it's just a little scary trying to screw up the courage to answer our call to discipleship.

Remember the scene in the Sound of Music where Maria sings the song "I Have Confidence." Maria is a young girl in an abbey in Austria. Her heart's desire is to become a nun. But she is an impish young girl. She is full of life and energy. And she's mischievous and her antics have the abbey in an uproar. To try to deal with the situation the Abbess's decide to send Maria to Salzburg Austria to be the governess for the Vontrap children. Now she is terrified of the assignment and when the time comes for her to leave the nuns have to push her out the door. And so, on the way she is trying to gather up the courage to face the challenges ahead of her. And so, she starts singing this song, "I Have Confidence." And the more she sings, the more energized and confident and animated she becomes until she is filled to the brim with confidence when she approaches the Vontrap home. But then when she arrives at the gate and sees the immense house, Maria wilts. She says, "Oh help."

When we're faced with the immense responsibilities of our call to discipleship we might feel a little bit like Maria. We might feel like saying, "oh help." God has confidence in us. It makes me think of a coozy that someone gave me when I was serving the church in Brandon when we were facing some real challenges. And the coozy says, "I know God will not give me anything I can't handle, I just wish he didn't trust me so much." (Laughter) We can feel like that. We are given this call to discipleship, this call to go out into the world. To be the embodiment of God's love, to be God's love and flesh and blood. We are not sent out into the world empty-handed. God gives us the reassurance of his promise. A promise that is expressed in today's first reading from the prophet Isaiah. Where we hear through the prophet God saying, "The word that I speak, the word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty. It will accomplish what I purpose for it." That's God's promise.

I've had an experience of the fulfillment of that promise of God firsthand. One Sunday, I preached a sermon that was a real dog. It was so boring, it almost put me to sleep. (Laughter) But after the service, a young woman who was facing some significant challenges in her life came into my office with tears in her eyes thanking me for that sermon that I thought was a dog. To hear her tell it, that sermon was almost a transformational experience for her. A lot of times now when people say they enjoy the sermon, I will say always thank the Holy Spirit. Because it's what God does.

You see in our call to discipleship, it's not about us. It's not about what we do. It's about what God does in and through our lives. Though God calls us in our baptisms to be disciples of Jesus. To go into the world to be and make disciples and as he shares that call with us. He doesn't send us out empty-handed. He sends us with the Holy Spirit, he sends us with his promise that the words that he speaks in and through our lives will not return to him empty, they will accomplish his purpose.

Now in today's gospel, we hear this story, this parable of the sower and the sea, and we could get the idea that this parable is really intended for us to look at our lives to evaluate where we are in our journey of faith. Are we the beaten path? Are we the rocky soil? Are we the thorn invested soil? Or are we good soil? That's not a bad thing to do. But let me tell you, the emphasis of this parable is not about the soil, it's not about our lives. The emphasis of the parable is the eternal optimism and the abiding love of the sower of God. The parable is not about us, it's about God. And that should give us the courage and the inspiration to go out and share God's love. Because as we see in this parable, God spreads his seed everywhere on all soils. So that all people have the opportunity to come to know the joy and the grace of God's forgiving love. God wants that for all of us.

And so that should encourage us to go out into the world to share the love that God first has shared with us. So, this morning we hear the news that God has a lot of confidence in us. He has so much confidence in us that he places the future of his kingdom in our hands. And he sends us out, but as he sends us out he doesn't send us empty-handed. He sends us with his

Holy Spirit and he sends us with that promise that his word will accomplish what he purposes it to do.

God has so much confidence in us not because of any supernatural gifts that he's given us. He has confidence in us because of his superabundant grace. See the harvest has reaped not because of us but because of God. So, this morning let us hear the good news that the seeds of God's kingdom are planted with us. And we are called to go and to sow those seeds in the world. And let us have the courage and the confidence to go forth and live out our discipleship. Because when God sends us out we don't go empty-handed. We go with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and we go with his promise that his words will accomplish in and through our lives. That we will accomplish what he wants us to do.

PRAYER

May that peace of God which passes all understanding keep your heart and your minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN