

October 2, 2016

## PRAYER

Let the words of my mouth be mediations to our hearts and be always acceptable unto thee. O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. AMEN

## SERMON

I suspect that most of you, maybe all of you, at one time or another in your life asked God the same thing that the apostles asked Jesus. Increase our faith, thinking that that's what was really necessary for me to live the life that God wants me to live. I needed more faith and so when the disciples asked one we're not terribly surprised about that. But the answer that Jesus gives, I think, is rather surprising and rather telling. His first response is, "You know if you had the faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to that mulberry tree be rooted up and planted into the sea and it would obey." Just that much faith is all that is required for that to take place. Now I don't know about you but I've never put that to the test. I've never actually ordered a tree to be uprooted and planted into the sea. So I don't know if you've done that then let me know how it goes.

Jesus goes on to say, "Now which one of you had servants out in the field when they came back in from doing their work. You would say to them oh please, sit down and let me prepare you something to eat. I'm sure you're tired from all of your hard work and let me serve you and you eat." That's not the way things were done. When the servant came in, their next task was to prepare the meal and afterwards their masters would sit down, eat, drink, and then the servant could continue on with their day and eat, and drink, and take their rest. He's says you're just like that. You have to understand that what you have been called to is not a life of privilege. You are only fulfilling what God has for you to do. You are God's servants in this endeavor. And so when it comes to the end when you have done all that God has asked you to do, are you expecting a great big Thank You from God for doing what you are supposed to be doing?

Accept that God has accepted you as his children and just simply say we're worthless servants and we're only have done what we should or ought to have done. Interesting, because we like to think God is pleased with what we're doing in his name. That God is simply saying, "Have you seen my servant Greg, isn't he doing a great job." And that's not the way it's going. You see we're not called to have more faith. It doesn't require a lot of faith. It requires faith period. End of story. You have faith, you don't have faith. Maybe it's a gift, maybe it's something that you've learned and received from others. But you have it or you don't have it. It's not really how much faith you have. It's about allowing the faith that you have to lead your life, to live a faithful life. Faithful to one that you have faith in. Faith in God and faithful to God. And that's what the disciples said they called to, living a life of faith. Being faithful in the living of their life and taking the word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ out into the world.

And it's not in order to receive a great gift or a great Thank You from God, it's to do what we were created to do. To live that out, because the gift has already been given. The gift of life, the gift of relationship with God. The gift of relationship with one another and the possibility of love, that's what we have already been given. That is the gift, it's already been received and now we are simply living it out to honor God for what God has given us.

What does it mean then to live a faithful life? Last year about this time, I did a stewardship sermon and I asked for a commitment from the members here, a year's commitment. I asked the people, and I committed myself to pray daily for at least twenty minutes, to worship at least one hour a week, to minister, to volunteer, to give by time, talent, and treasure for four hours a month and finally to share the gifts and treasures that I have been blessed with, with God. Asked everybody to make that commitment, didn't have them sign anything, reminded them a few times through the year of that commitment. Why did I ask you to make that commitment? Because that is what it is to live a faithful life. To be in contact with our Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer every day to acknowledge as I'm going through my day that God is the one who has blessed me with this life, with this possibility, with this hope of living. To speak to God of the concerns of my heart and also to listen to God for God is directing me to live my life and how to live my life in relationship with God, in relationship with the people that God has brought into my life. To be reminded that I am a servant because I have chosen to be. Because God has asked me to be his child and to work with him in the world as a bearer of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And he's invited and asked all of us to do the same. So living a faithful life means that we spend time with God, speaking to God, and maybe more importantly listening to God. Once we have asked God for the desires of our hearts for others, for ourselves, then we have asked God to show us how we are to move through this day, how we might have our hearts and minds and eyes opened to the possibilities of sharing the gospel. Then it's important to give God the space and the time to hear and listen to how God responds to us. To be attentive though out the day, to see the possibilities of lessons are, to be called to share the gospel by word and example.

To live a faithful life is to recognize that we are not living it on our own but that God has created for us a community called the church where we come together, where we worship, we honor God, with giving God our time, giving God our attention, listening to the word of God. Praising with music, with song, what God has done, what God is doing, what God has called us to be a part of. To worship together, to receive the sacrament, to obey the command that Jesus gave to his disciples. Do this in remembrance of me, come together, share the bread and the wine because it is my body and my blood. You come together for Eucharist for thanksgiving, you come together for holy communion. We have come together, we are bound together by the holiness of God, by the presence of Jesus Christ, and that wine and bread, that blood and body. We worship together, we celebrate what God has done for us, we recognize that we are called to be together to do the next thing, to go out, to express the ministry and the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. To fulfill our baptismal covenant of seeking justice for people, for being ministers of peace to the world. To go out and address as individuals and as a body as the body of Christ so that justice may be done in our communities.

We may not rest until there is justice for everyone in our community. We do that together as a voice, as the body of Christ. We lend ourselves, our time and our talents, and the ways that God leads us as individuals but also as the body of Christ that's called St. Jude's to address the needs and concerns of our community. It's living faithfully, accepting who we are called to be and offering it to the world, to go out and to share with the world, the hope, the peace of being the body of Christ.

The fourth is to share the blessings that we have been given. This is where people start getting uncomfortable because this is giving money. When we deal with money it really starts to worry people. Sometimes it's because they feel guilty, sometimes it's because they feel like they don't fully understand

why the church even talks about money. Sometimes it's because they're concerned they're giving more than somebody else. Please put those fears aside. God simply asks us to honor what God has given us by sharing. Why the church, a building, a community asks for pledges and such about this time every year is because this place is a point of contact. It's a place where we come together to be reminded of the gospel, hopefully to be energized, to worship together to know that we are part of a greater community. To know that we are a voice in our community.

It is also a point of contact for those who are lost, who are looking for a place. Who have a sense of faith, who have a sense of what the church is about, who have a sense but feel as though they are not a part. And the churches of our community, all the churches of our community provide a point of contact where they might come and be accepted, might become a part, might hear the gospel in a way that touches their hearts, that gives them hope, that gives them peace, that gives them the opportunity to become a part of this community that Christ has created and that we are a part of. And it is for us to support this place, this point of contact, this place where the gospel is preached from which we go to share it with the world.

And so this time every year, we have a stewardship leader or committee and they will be sending out a letter. They'll be sending out a letter relatively soon because they will share their idea and understanding of what it is to be living faithfully as part of the church. And the importance of giving, not only prayer and worship and volunteering time and talents, but also the importance of sharing your treasures so that it doesn't have control over you but you're exercising control over it in order to honor God. That's what it's about.

Please read the letter when you see a letter come from St. Jude's, don't simply toss it away. Please listen to what they have to say. They'll be a pledge card in it, whether you pledge or not, that's between you and God. Nobody is going to come after you, too stiff on you and say you must give to the church. That won't happen. This is an opportunity, it's not an obligation. Know this, that if you pledge to the church, I don't know what it is. I don't care what it is. All I know is that we have a budget to try to keep everything running and allow this to remain the people for you to have this contact with the church. I hope that you will take some of your twenty minutes of prayer and really open yourself to God about what stewardship is for you, about what supporting the church really means. And then make your decision about how or if you choose to do that.

Disciples came to Jesus and said increase our faith. It doesn't take a lot of faith; it just takes faith. He says, "It's not about the amount of faith, it's about living your life faithfully." May we make a commitment, a lifelong commitment to live our lives faithfully, in prayer, in worship, in giving of ourselves and in giving of our treasures.