

Sunday Service Sermons

21 February 2021

Saving Faith

How about: Faith that makes "The" difference?

What kind or how much faith do you have?

I am in a difficult situation right now, as I write this it is raining lightly and my almonds are blooming. Moisture kills almond pollen.

Remember me telling you that I told God that I would praise Him for every drop of rain we get this season?

I said that in all sincerity, wanting to let Him know I am trusting Him to provide the moisture that is needed to produce an almond crop.

I am having great difficulty doing that at this point in time.

Not as much the trusting but the praising Him for the light rain that is reducing my crop potential for this season.

When I made that promise I was not thinking of this situation.

How often we do that as human beings.

We see just in front of us and not the larger picture.

I am finding it a strange situation to praise God for rain when I really do not want it.

But it is making the snow that makes the water we need this summer.

Our sight is limited and our reflection dim.

My faith is getting stretched.

What stretches your faith?

How about a child going through a most difficult time?

I have been through that, most of us have.

How about a retirement situation that is very different that we anticipated as we prepared for retirement?

Or, for you younger ones, what does the future hold for me and how can I best prepare for it?

There is always a situation that will test our faith in God.

I am afraid that I fear that wearing masks, getting unproven shots that might help or might hurt are a precursor to the Mark of the Beast that will prevent us from living the life we have grown accustomed to if we do not take it.

And it will end our life with God if we do take it.

If you believe the Bible then you know that one day it will happen.

If it happens in my lifetime will I be able to endure what comes as a true believer not able to deny the God I love and serve.

I truly believe that what we are living now is the beginning of all of this.

It is the takeover of those in power telling citizens, worldwide, how to live their lives.

I hope not, but I fear yes.

We must have the faith to see the times in which we live and the faith to stand firmly for God no matter what comes against us.

The text for today is: "And Jesus said unto him, Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." *Luke 23:43.*

Jesus came to save the lost so it is fitting that he should die between two of them.

And they represent the world.

One believed and one scorned.

One was saved and one was lost.

Those who put him there did it to show that he was like them and not who he claimed to be.

Yet God used this to glorify himself.

Jesus demonstrated his great grace and mercy even as he died on the cross.

Last words are significant.

Many poignant quotations are from the final words people spoke while on earth.

One unbeliever is quoted as saying, at his moment of death, "About to take a fearful leap into the dark."

He was right, without Jesus death is dark and terrifying.

Billy Graham is quoted as saying, "Earth is receding; heaven is opening; God is calling!"

The two thieves show us the two types of people.

One continued to reject Jesus, mocking him by demanding that he prove his power with a miraculous act.

The other man, however, just might have understood the spiritual nature of Jesus' message and ministry, for he requested a part of Christ's kingdom.

His words, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" spoke of a life beyond the present situation.

Deathbed salvation is possible.

An individual can be saved after years of sinning.

That is what God's grace does.

One can come to God in the last moments of their life, but oh the glory that they miss.

How sad to be a babe in Christ at the moment of death.

The thief on the cross was one of these.

Jesus verified the sincerity of the thief's confession with his reply to him.

He was saying, "I'm sorry for my sins. I accept you for who you are. In this last brief period of my life, I want to go on record that I identify with you and all that you stand for. Where I have erred, please forgive me. I throw myself entirely upon your mercy. Let me be a part of you during these remaining moments on earth and let me share with you where you go".

This is all any of us can do, regardless of how young or how old we may be.

No one is saved by piling up good works in order to obligate God to declare them righteous.

Even the best people on earth are sinners, and their righteousness is like "filthy rags" in the sight of God.

We can know that we are saved.

Have you ever heard someone express doubt in whether they are saved?

Like, I hope I am a Christian or I trust I am saved?

That might sound humble but it is not scriptural.

Vernard Eller, religion professor at La Verne. Used to say that he was being saved.

That it was a process that required a lifetime to achieve.

Not so, perfection is such, but salvation is the simple confession and acceptance of what Christ did for us on the cross.

The Bible is clear on this. "Confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead". *Rom. 10:9*

When you have done this, you are saved, a member of the family of God.

It is a fact with or without the feeling of it.

The feeling is not the fact or the proof.

The authority for our salvation rests upon what God's Word says to us.

A feeling may come immediately or gradually, but the fact of the new life occurs instantaneously.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, we can know that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

To say that you are certain of your salvation is not boasting but is rather accepting that God does what he says he will do.

God put our sins on Jesus' back when Jesus died on the cross.
God is so completely satisfied with the substitutional death of his son for our sins that he will eternally remain so and will never again take up judgment against us.
In the resurrection of Christ, God vindicated everything that Jesus did and gave all authority to him.
When we receive the Savior in simple faith, we can say with assurance, "I'm saved and I know it."
How marvelous is this assurance.
Although the thief was saved at the twelfth hour, he was saved!
Someone spoke of it as "literally blundering into paradise."
This is not, however, a fair description.
We all "blunder" in to heaven, because we must come simply as sinners, throwing ourselves upon the grace of God.
True, this man was one who had wasted his life, but in a sense we all do the same thing until we come to the Savior.
Many years ago Ambrose, one of the early Christian preachers, said, "How much richer was Christ's grace than the malefactor's prayer!"
A modern writer expressed it this way, "Christ swept the man into the full embrace of God's love."
One fact worth noting is that it was not the words of Jesus that led the man to repentance and faith.
Jesus did not address the thief at all until the thief spoke to him.
The convicting work of the Holy spirit had already been done before the man uttered a word.
The sinlessness of Jesus, his refusal to utter a word of harshness, his magnanimity in the face of cruel treatment, these were the things the Holy Spirit used to bring the thief to his prayer for forgiveness.
Yet when Jesus did speak, he added greatly to the impression he had already made on the man,
He spoke of the unseen world as a place with which he was already familiar.
Jesus assured the thief that he was as influential in that world as the thief considered him to be.
When this sinner laid on Jesus the guilt of his sin, the weight of his soul, and his concern for eternity, Jesus accepted the burden and brought assurance to him.
He can do the same for anyone, anywhere, anytime.
He can do it for you!
Or has he already done it for you?
Then you are part of the family of God and should be celebrating it each and every day that you remain on this earth.
Praise God from Whom!