

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity, October 23, 2022**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 276, 257:3, 296, 381, 383:4.

Lessons: 2 Samuel 7:17-29, Ephesians 6:10-17, John 3:13-21.

Sermon Text: John 4:46-54

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ Jesus, our Savior, dear friends,

The word *faith* is used in a very broad sense often. People speak about their faith, but do not specify just what they believe. Some are satisfied to express their faith by saying, "I believe in God." What do they mean by that? Do they simply believe there is some kind of god? Or, do they believe in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Do they trust in Jesus as their Savior?

Such questions are essential. They must be answered, for the Bible is very specific in its teaching about faith and salvation. To have saving faith means to trust in Christ. Paul told the jailer at Philippi, "***Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,***" Acts 16:31a. To have saving faith means to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel says of Jesus, "***He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world,***" 1 John 2:2. Jesus says, "***I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life,***" John 5:24.

Such faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. The Bible says, "***Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned,***" Mark 16:16. Since such faith is essential for salvation, we should consider it a great privilege to learn

**IMPORTANT TRUTHS ABOUT FAITH.**

1. **True faith does not rely on external evidence.**
2. **True faith takes Jesus at his Word.**
3. **Faith is strengthened by Jesus' Word.**

***"Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum."*** Cana in Galilee was the little village where Jesus had performed his first miracle while attending a wedding feast. On this visit to Cana a royal official from the court of King Herod was also there. ***"When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death."*** The royal official made an urgent trip from Capernaum to Cana, about 25 miles away. His son was close to death.

Jesus, who is the Son of God, knew that the faith of the royal official was weak because the man thought it was necessary for Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son. He was relying on external evidence. That's why Jesus said to him, ***"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe."*** Jesus rebuked the royal official for thinking that Jesus had to come in person to Capernaum so his son could be healed. At first the man did not understand why Jesus rebuked him. He then begged Jesus, ***"Sir, come down before my child dies."***

The first important truth about faith in Jesus that we want to learn from our text is that true faith does not rely on external evidence. This truth should be a part of our spiritual knowledge. To help us learn this, let us consider another example from the Bible. After Jesus' resurrection from the dead, he appeared to his disciples and showed himself to be alive. Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared. When the other disciples told him

that they had seen Jesus, Thomas would not believe it. He said, ***“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it,”*** John 20:25. That’s why Thomas is called “Doubting Thomas.” He demanded what we call external evidence that Jesus was alive. A week later Jesus appeared to the disciples again and Thomas was with them. Jesus told him, ***“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe,”*** John 20:27. When Thomas then said to Jesus, ***“My Lord and my God!”*** v. 28, Jesus told him, ***“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed,”*** v. 29.

From this we learn that true faith does not rely on external evidence. So also we must not demand of the Lord some external evidence before we believe what he tells us in his Word. We must not say, “If the Lord does this or that, I will believe.” We must not make our faith dependent on the condition that the Lord help us out of some present trouble we have. A person who thinks that way only imagines he has the true Christian faith.

This leads us to the second important truth about true faith. The Lord wants us to believe in Christ because of what the Gospel Word says about him and salvation. **True faith takes Jesus at his Word.**

## 2.

When the royal official from Capernaum begged Jesus again to come to Capernaum to heal his son, Jesus told him, ***“You may go. Your son will live.”*** Then we are told of the wonderful change that had taken place in the royal official’s heart. ***“The man took Jesus at his word and departed.”*** Now he believed what Jesus promised. He took Jesus at his Word. He now believed that his son was healed without seeing any external evidence. We call that a simple, childlike faith.

Let us learn from other Bible passages that this kind of faith is the true Christian faith. The centurion of Capernaum came to Jesus for help, saying, ***“Lord, my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.”*** In this instance, Jesus told him, ***“I will go and heal him,”*** Matthew 8:6.7. The humble centurion said, ***“Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed,”*** Matthew 8:8. That’s taking Jesus at his word. That such faith was pleasing to Jesus is evident from what he said to the people there. ***“I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith,”*** Matthew 8:10.

Another example of such great faith is that found in the book of Romans where Paul speaks of Abraham’s faith. Abraham’s wife was unable to bear children. This was the circumstance when God promised the hundred-year-old Abraham that he would have a son. This is what Paul writes about Abraham, ***“Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised,”*** Romans 4:20-21. This is an outstanding example of true faith.

We can learn something about true faith when we consider how the Bible teaching of God’s creation of the universe in six ordinary, twenty-four-hour days is rejected or ignored by the great majority of people. They believe various foolish theories of evolution that teach that this universe came into being over a period of millions or billions of years, one form of life evolving from another form of life. This is what most people believe simply because this theory has been promoted for many years. We don’t have to accept such outlandish theories, and we do not, for this simple reason: We take God at his word. There is no substitute for what God’s Word teaches, ***“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,”*** Genesis 1:1. All the details about creation are far beyond our understanding, but with a childlike faith we take God at his Word. We believe whatever the Bible says simply because it’s God’s Word. That’s true faith. The book of Hebrews gives this definition of faith, ***“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible,”*** Hebrews 11:1-3. True faith accepts what the Bible says about creation because it is God’s Word in which there are no errors or contradictions. It is as the psalmist says to the Lord, ***“All your words are true,”*** Psalm 119: 160.

We want to learn yet that **faith is strengthened by Jesus’ Word.**

## 3.

Our text says about the royal official, ***“While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, ‘The fever***

*left him yesterday at the seventh hour.’ Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, ‘Your son will live.’ So he and all his household believed.”* The royal official was in this way assured that his son had been made well by the powerful Word of Jesus. By that same powerful Word the royal official and his household were strengthened in the faith.

It is important that we know that Jesus’ Word can strengthen faith. We have examples of this in the Bible elsewhere. Jesus taught a woman by Jacob’s well in a town called Sychar. When she heard Jesus’ Word she also told other people about Jesus and what he had taught her. Jesus stayed two days at that place, and we are told, *“Because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world,’”* John 4:41-42.

In the book of Acts we are told about Paul’s preaching. *“They preached the good news in that city (Derbe) and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith,”* Acts 14:21-22. To be kept in the faith and strengthened in the faith is all a part of the work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed for this for his followers, saying, *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth,”* John 17:17.

With all that we have said about the importance of faith, we dare not forget what the object of our faith must be, and that is Jesus. We dare not forget what God the Father has done for us through Jesus. This is the good news, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life,”* John 3:16. We need not think about the believing in Jesus as though that were our responsibility. What is essential is that we hear the good news for all sinners, *“that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them,”* 2 Corinthians 5:19. When we hear this good news or when we read it and meditate on it, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts to create faith and then also to strengthen that faith. In our preaching you will note that we do not beg anyone to believe. We don’t ask people right there on the spot to make a decision for Christ. We simply present the message of the Gospel as it is given in the Bible, how Jesus by his work of redemption has made us righteous before God. Then we leave it to the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts the faith that accepts the Gospel. It in no way depends on our own efforts, for God says of his Word, *“So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it,”* Isaiah 55:11.

So, let us pray the words we shall sing in the next hymn,

*“I know my faith is founded  
On Jesus Christ, my God and Lord;  
And this my faith confessing,  
Unmoved I stand upon His Word.  
Man’s reason cannot fathom  
The truth of God profound;  
Who trusts her subtle wisdom  
Relies on shifting ground.  
God’s Word is all-sufficient,  
It makes divinely sure,  
And trusting in its wisdom,  
My faith shall rest secure.”*  
(The Lutheran Hymnal 381:1)  
*Amen*

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