

Sermon 20th Sunday after Pentecost [Prop. 22], Yr. C @ St Johns – 2/10/16

“It takes faith...” (Luke 17:5-10)

- Pastor André Meyer

Text... Pray: Heavenly Father, bless us by your Word today through your Spirit, in Jesus' name, Amen.

It takes faith... to *be* a child of God.

It takes faith to believe that the Scriptures are God's Word; that God created the world; that God parted the Red Sea; that God provided manna and quail for His people for 40 years in the wilderness. It takes faith to believe that when God speaks, *things* happen; and when God says, *it is so*. It takes faith to believe the virgin birth, and that Jesus is truly human *and* truly God.

It takes faith to believe that Jesus healed the blind man; that Jesus cured the sick; that He raised the dead. It takes faith to believe that Jesus died for the sins of the world as God's perfect sacrifice, and that He was *resurrected* from death. It takes faith to believe that Jesus is with us always by the power of the Holy Spirit. It takes faith to believe that God creates us as the Church to *be His instrument* and the means by which His grace and mercy comes to people on earth.

It takes faith to see that God is doing His good work in our hearts despite how we continue to stuff things up... despite how we continue to hurt others by what we say or do... or when we as God's people *fail* to act when we should.

It takes faith to believe that God forgives *us* our sins... It takes faith to hear God's (Jesus') voice when the pastor says, “*I forgive you... peace be with you...*” ...And to trust through Christ, that God *is* merciful to us.

It takes faith to forgive those who sin against us – however many times they come to us and say they're 'sorry' and ask to be forgiven their wrongs against us.

It takes faith to love someone who has hurt you, forgetting their sin and treating them as if they didn't hurt you as they have.

It takes faith to let go of the hurts of the past – because sometimes we like to go back and wallow in the mud of our sins, or get some mud and throw it around.

It takes faith to exercise self-restraint to not spread gossip behind people's backs, and to be respectful of them instead.

It takes faith to leave our old ways behind and take up the new opportunities that God gives to us. It takes faith to believe that God can do amazing things through us when we *all work together* as the body of Christ to share the Good News of His love.

It takes faith to see that God is doing something in our own stubborn and proud hearts as we listen to His Word; as we read the Bible every day; as we pray to God for those who need His help.

It takes faith to come to God's house to worship Him each week – even if the sermon is too long or the message doesn't seem to be relevant to us... *just yet*.

It takes faith to hunger for heavenly things when the things of this world are attractive and *seem* very tasty to sample.

It takes faith to continue to pass on the faith at home; to pray and have devotion with your household each day; to persist in raising your children, grand-children or god-children to know Jesus; and to trust that God will grow the seed of faith after we have done our best to sow it.

It takes faith to continue teaching children in Children's Church or Confirmation especially when some parents expect *you* to do the job that God asks *them* to do in the home.

It takes faith to continue doing things humbly for your Church without always hearing a '*thank you,*' but knowing quietly that you are serving your Lord.

It takes faith to believe that God can do amazing things *through* us – *we*, the broken, faithless, disobedient, headstrong, and hypocritical vessels that we are.

It takes faith to believe that God *can* use us *despite* of us; that God can make us victorious even when the battle seems lost; or, that God will shine the light of hope when the night seems dark and hopeless.

It takes faith to believe that we are made forever God's children through Baptism simply by a splash of water used together with God's promises.

It takes faith to believe that God fills us with His powerful Spirit through His heavenly food as we eat Jesus' body and blood in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. It takes faith to trust that Jesus is truly present as He promises, not because the Church says it, but because *He* says and declares it so.

It takes faith to believe that God's Word is true – even when many vigorously try to undermine its authority as God's Word; and faith to trust that God's wisdom is greater than world's 'wisdom' and ways.

It takes faith to give money to causes or people you've never seen; and faith that God will use your gift given *in faith* to provide for those in need.

It takes faith to pack up and leave your life behind to go somewhere you don't know to people you don't know to tell them about God's love for them. ...It takes faith to trust that God *will* provide us with a new pastor *and* that His timing will be *just right*.

It takes faith to spend time and befriend people you don't know very well, and then, when the opportunity presents, to share *your* faith with them.

It takes faith to say “*I believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Saviour*” among those who will make fun of you, turn their backs on you, even persecute (or kill you) for believing in Christ.

It takes faith to hear Jesus’ prompting through the Holy Spirit upon our heart to visit someone, or *do* or say something *even* if it seems odd at the time when He asks.

It takes faith to wait patiently for prayers to be answered, and to believe that *God will provide* for our needs and for the godly desires of our heart. It takes faith to trust that whatever God provides, it will somehow *be* enough.

It takes faith to draw the line and say “*No,*” to sport and other things until after lunch on Sunday’s because it is the Sabbath – our day of *rest*, where we make resting with God in worship our *first* priority for the week.

It takes faith to believe in God when we are suffering or in pain, and that God will sustain us, and strengthen us until He heals us.

It takes faith to see the world with different eyes than everyone else; to pray to a seemingly unseen God; or to follow the ways of One who cannot always be seen.

It takes faith to do what’s right in God’s eyes when everyone is doing something else.

It takes faith to see that God holds each of us in the palm of His hand... and to believe that God will always keep His promises to us.

It takes faith to know that because of Jesus God sees us as His perfect and precious children; and faith to know that we are the apple of God’s eye; the jewel in His crown; the light in His world; and the joy of His heart.

It takes faith to believe that God cares for us when all we want is be angry with Him for our sufferings, or, for the sufferings of others.

It takes faith to believe that God will one day release us from our burdens; or that He will give us His peace, His presence, and His Spirit whenever we ask.

It takes faith to believe that God is looking after us when we are afraid; and that God will *never leave us or give up* on us – even when others do.

It takes faith to see that God is at work in and through us – even *despite* of us; ...and faith to keep on serving God when all we want to do is give up.

It takes faith to trust on our death bed that *we will live on* because of Jesus, in God’s kingdom, *forever*.

It takes faith to follow our Shepherd who calls us to go, love our neighbour; to go and love our enemy; to go and serve to those who treat us badly; and to pray for or speak kindly about those who have done us wrong.

It takes faith to ask God to help us do something and then, to actually *go and do* it trusting that God *will help us* and give us *what we need* along the way.

It takes faith to go sailing and fishing for God – trusting that when we go, He will fill our nets with the fish that *He* wants caught.

It takes faith to believe that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins and for the sins of the whole world – even if some can't accept or receive God's gift *just yet...* [Pause]

It... takes... *faith...* for *so many things* as a Christian. Without faith we are truly lost and in the darkness. Without faith we cannot please God – without faith we cannot even *know* God...

What then is '*faith*'? Firstly, faith is *not a work* but it is a gift that God gives us to *be* His children in this world. And secondly, faith is a response of simply being, believing, living and trusting in God through all circumstances; trusting that God is there with us through the good times *and* the bad.

Faith is like a muscle, that each of us is responsible for using and that each of us must exercise daily so that it is useful for when God calls us to use it for His purposes. Using our faith is simply living as God calls us to as Jesus' disciples – and it is not for our glory but to God's.

When God calls us to use our faith let us not be too scared to act or too afraid of what God will ask of us. Let us resist the Devil who wants us to hide our faith away where it cannot be used. Let us use our gift of faith to serve and worship God, and let's feed our faith daily with God's holy Word and exercise it, or it will slowly wither away like muscles do when they are neglected. The gift of faith is never dead; it may simply lie dormant in someone's heart – even as small as a mustard seed – simply needing the gentle encouragement of the Spirit to fan it into flame once more.

Remember, faith is not a work, it is a gift of God and a response. And through Baptism, each of you has it... as big as a mustard seed is all we need, so that we can see God *do* great things! ...So, how will you respond, *in faith* today? Tomorrow? This week? This year? Amen.

And the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.