

Trinity XXI

Ephesians 6:10-20 & John 4:46-54

I heard a sermon given by a great preacher of our time who claimed that “faith is a risk.” I said to myself no, faith is more than a risk. There is a difference between both. You take a risk when you step into something without direction. You have nobody to direct you, instruct you, warn you, or advise you on the dangers ahead. You have nobody to tell you: “Friend wrong way. Turn around and come back!” And if you don’t listen, you step into the unknown! You’re taking a risk!

But to us Christians, faith is when you step out at the direction of God. We step out in faith when we let God direct our journey. We step out in faith when we rely totally on Him, not on our opinions, thoughts, and feelings. We step out in faith when we surrender to his will, not ours. We see in the Bible how Abraham stepped out of his own home country and went and established in a foreign land at the direction of God. We also see how Peter stepped out over into the water at the direction of Jesus.

Today’s gospel passage from John 4, brings us the story of “a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.” As we can see in the account, this man ran to Jesus to seek healing for his son. As we read this gospel passage, we grasp the whole idea of the Word of God which is a word of healing and salvation. The point that Jesus is making here is that there is a difference between knowing something and having faith in that thing. Faith requires trust. The nobleman in the gospel had a knowledge of Jesus. Now, what the Lord is asking for is trust. By walking away without Jesus following him, the man stepped out in faith. He trusted Jesus and followed his direction. He trusted the healing power of Jesus and left. That is what biblical faith is all about.

What we learn from this account is that as Christians, we are spiritual beings. We need to rise above the things of this world and follow the instructions of St Paul in today’s epistle that, “We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). St Paul is introducing us to the reality of spiritual warfare in the Christian life. Look at what the nobleman did. He knew that there were some medical doctors in town and that they could prescribe some drugs to control the pain that his son was going through, or even to heal him. But he came to Jesus. Let that be a lesson for us. It is okay to reach out to our doctors. But it is important to pray and ask God to direct them to see and prescribe the right remedy. We pray that God may use them to heal us.

Our Christian life is a life of spiritual battle. This is a 24/7 business. And we win the fight, not by using the weapons or the tools of this world, because “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,

but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10: 4). The win the battle by following the direction of Jesus.

Like Abraham, like Peter, and like the nobleman of the gospel, let us step out in faith and obediently do what the Lord is asking us to do.

Remember, risk is something that you do on your own, without direction. Faith is something that Jesus directs you to do, and you must obediently do it.

I would like to end with this quote from Leonard Ravenhill, “one of these days, some simple soul will pick up the Book of God, read it and believe it. Then the rest of us will be embarrassed. We have adopted the convenient theory that the Bible is a Book to be explained, whereas first and foremost it is a Book to be believed and after that to be obeyed!”

May the Lord grant us the grace to be obedient to his word so that “we may be partakers of his heavenly kingdom!”

Prayer

O GOD, merciful and compassionate, who art ever ready to hear the prayers of those who put their trust in thee; Graciously hearken to us who call upon thee and grant us thy help in this our need; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.