

✠ Luke 12:22-40 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

“He believed the Lord, and God counted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). It is written, “The righteous shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17). But faith in what? That is easily answered: faith, that is, belief in the promises of God revealed in the person and work of Jesus. Faith is that assurance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). By believing God, one shall be counted as righteous. The righteous shall live by believing God.

And what creates this faith? That, too, is easily answered. The Word of God creates faith. Observe Abram as he listened to the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord caused Abram to believe God. And believing God’s Word, he was counted as righteous. He did not believe a feeling or an idea. He did not believe God insofar as God aligned with science and reason. In fact, God’s promise flies in the face of science and reason. For who would reasonably believe that a man and woman of ancient age would conceive? Science laughs in the face of such a promise. But God is the Master of both science and reason, and His Word does not return to Him void and is not powerless to achieve what it sets out to do.

Let this example alone serve as a warning to all who would mold and shape God’s Word so that it must be subject to science and reason rather than science and reason being subject to God’s Word. God will not be mocked. Where your heart is there your treasure will be also. If science or reason are the end-all-be-all of what is true and right then there is no resurrection of the dead and God is a liar. But, if God does not lie, and He does not, then science and reason must shut their mouths and simply believe God’s Word. This faith is credited as righteousness.

Thus, in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, Abram believed God’s promises, His Word, and was thereby counted as righteous. It was faith that received the promises of God. Notice, too, that there is no work attached to this promise. God does not say, “if you do such and such, then I will promise such and such.” Rather God does what He does according to His own good will and pleasure. Abram did nothing to deserve such a promise and blessing, yet God chose to be mercifully kind to Abram and grant greatness anyway.

So prior to Abram’s faith God promised him posterity and grace. God’s Word is not dependant upon your faith but upon God, who is true and holy. Let your faith be small and weak, for so it is anyway, or do you think you have as great a faith than that of Daniel or Jeremiah, king David or St. Peter, St. Jude, St. Matthew, or any of the faithful men and women who stood as Nero’s human torches or faced the coliseum’s lions? Let God’s Word be a bulwark and fortress that sustains and protects you even when you doubt, as Abram no doubt did, asking for a sign of the promise. Then your faith will surpass that of St. Peter, who often doubted, and will remain wholly undefiled when death and martyrdom knocks on your door. What is it to God if your faith is great or small? God’s Word will accomplish what it sets out to do despite the greatness or fragility of your faith.

Often we think our faith strong and steady, able to withstand any onslaught. But it is often then that we are at our weakest and fall easily into temptation. For when we think ourselves strong and mighty, then we begin to put faith in our faith rather than in God’s Word. Then we say such things as, “I don’t need to go to hear the preacher; I’m already saved. I don’t

need to confess my sins; I'm a child of God. I don't need the body and blood of Christ; I have no sins in need of forgiveness." But then God cannot work the miracle of faith in our lives because we think we have it and cease to listen to His Word and begin listening to our own heart. Repent.

For when we think our faith small and pathetic, weak and puny, then it is often at its height, for then our Lord and God can show us the strength of His right hand and the might of His love by forgiving our sins and counting us as righteous. It is when we think that our faith is as hopeless as a fish out of water, that we cling more steadfastly and tenaciously to God's promises and Word, crying out for mercy while thanksgiving and praise jump off our tongue.

Then we stand under the blessing of the Twelve, "O you of little faith (Luke 12:28). O you who are unable to save yourself and who needs to be constantly reminded of God's grace and love, mercy and compassion. O you whose salvation does not depend upon your faith, as if our faith accomplishes salvation, but you whose salvation depends upon God's good will."

If the birds of the air and the beasts of the fields are cared for by God, how much more will He care for and protect you who cannot grow your own faith nor sustain it, but are saved and sustained by God's grace? It is a blessing for Jesus to say, "O you of little faith" because then we too will cry out with the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5), knowing that we are wholly dependant upon our Lord Jesus. Great or small, firm or flimsy, strong or weak, our faith is created and sustained by God's Word.

Abram believed God's promise. And what promise is that? That Abram would have an heir? Yes. That by Abram all nations would be blessed? Most certainly. But more than that, Abram believed God's promise that He would send forth a Savior to redeem Abram from the life of sin and death. It was grace upon grace that God chose Abram to carry the future Messiah in his loins. But no matter where the Messiah would come from, Abram believed God's promise handed down from Adam, and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Our Lord testifies to this when He says, "Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Abraham saw the Day of the Lord through the eyes of faith, for faith is the conviction of things not seen. Thus, Abraham went out from his people and dwelt in a foreign land, living in tents as a sojourner with nowhere to lay his head. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10).

Scripture says that Abraham died in faith, having not received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar. And lest we think Scripture speaks of the Promise Land, the land of the Canaanites, it clarifies by saying of Abraham and his descendants that, "[They] acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on earth. They desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:13, 16).

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. What grace and blessing are our Lord's words, O Christian. They are words that affect change and bring about a new heart. Our heavenly Father is not content to give you your plot of land upon which your house of straw sits. No, He wants to give to you His own kingdom and castle. One that will not need repair and will not fall apart around your ears. Your Father desires to bless you with an inheritance that will not spoil or fade, rust or be eaten by insects.

Therefore joyfully sell your possessions and give to the poor. Not thinking you earn heaven by selling your possessions and giving to the needy, but rather, rejoicing that your possessions pale in comparison to the riches of God in Christ, graciously lavished upon you, His Church. Such selling and giving is a sure sign of one who believes that the promised inheritance is not among the things of this earth, but is a city of God built by God for the inhabitants of His kingdom.

Be wise toward God and foolish toward men. For what man of earthly wisdom sells what is his to give to the needy? That is, what man of earthly wisdom empties himself for those who cannot pay him back and cannot give him food and drink? No man born of Adam would or could do such a thing. But our Lord is not born of Adam but of God.

It is folly in the eyes of man that one as powerful as God should become as weak as mortals. Yet it is the wisdom of God. It is foolishness that one who could call down legions of angels to protect Him and keep Him allows Himself to be dragged away, beaten, whipped, crowned with thorns, nailed to a tree, and finally to die a death of agony and despair. Yet is the wisdom of God.

For the wisdom of God is to forgive sinners and declare the unrighteous righteous. It is the wisdom of God to give to those who cannot pay Him back and cannot provide food or drink for Him. It is the wisdom of God to empty Himself into the Chalice for those who daily, indeed hourly, sin against Him. It is the wisdom of God to promise salvation to those who deserve eternal damnation and punishment.

And what sign, O God, do you give your people? How will your people know that you are the Lord God and that what you promise shall come to pass? What sign, O Lord, shall comfort them when they are tormented by doubt and assailed with fears? What sign shall you give that we may know that you forgive sinners and justify the wicked?

Thus says the Lord of Hosts, "I myself am your sign and your inheritance. Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Take, drink, this cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this often in remembrance of me. For I am risen, and my body will not spoil and my blood will never run dry. I am the Rock that gives water and the manna from heaven that is endless. I am your life and your portion."

O the depths of the wisdom of God! Rejoice, O Christian, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠