

Pastor Sylvia Barrett

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'Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence...' Hebrews 4:16 NIV

A new month! A busy month! Newsflash. Every month is busy! That is why we are here this morning, to sort out priorities in our heads and hearts, to help sort through all the junk mail, the questions, the challenges, the brief glimpses of how life should be, versus the day to day grind of existing, and the feeling deep within us, that there has to be something more out there, and the nagging feeling. Is this all there is? There has got to be more to life than what the world has to offer.

Our Scripture reading this morning opened with the disciples asking Jesus 'give us more faith!' That's something we can all understand. We all need more faith! Jesus replies you don't need a whole heap of faith, you just need some to get you started. Like yeast added to the ingredients for bread. Two teaspoons of yeast added to 5 cups of flour is sufficient for two loaves of bread. You don't need a lot of faith, but you need some to start you off.

And that is the problem right there. The gap between disbelief, and belief. A huge chasm for many. Just letting go, and suspending their disbelief, long enough to open their hearts and dusting down their souls, to let the light of God's presence enter.

You can't buy faith. It's not an external phenomenon. Faith comes from the inside. It's confidence, it's trust, it's letting go of yourself, and hanging on for dear life to the intuitive feeling we all have about this world. That there is a Creator behind it. And that our Creator, sent his Son into this world, to show us how to find faith, and to grow faith, from the smallest of seeds, to become strong and healthy.

As human beings we like being in control. Let's admit it. We know best. That's what we tell ourselves. Over and over again. That is our perception of our lives. We are in charge. I've often wondered why we are supposed to invite Jesus into our lives. Our lives are a mess! Shouldn't we be asking to join Jesus in his life? Think about it. If we truly believe Jesus is the Son of God, then if we are going to go looking for light and life, we should be heading in his direction, as fast as our legs can carry us. The second half of our Scripture today puts it bluntly. If you are a servant, you are expected to serve. That is your job. If we called to follow Christ, that is our job isn't it? To follow him... not the other way round.

It is in following Christ, that one day we will find ourselves approaching the throne of grace. Entering the presence of God. Following Jesus will lead us to an eternal life. Following Jesus will lead us into the presence of God.

Psalm 130: *'If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.'* All of us fall short on a daily basis. We do the things we shouldn't and we don't do the things we should. We are not perfect. We are here because we understand that we need help in living a good life.

Mortals... by ourselves we turn to dust.

Mortals plus Christ... leads to an eternal life. Where death is just a period at the end of a sentence before a new sentence begins.

Which is why, this morning you and I need to talk about faith. About confidence. About trust. Because we all need to approach the throne of God with confidence. We all need to come this morning to the Lords table with confidence. Believing in our hearts and souls that Jesus Christ will lead us to God. He leads, and it is our job to follow him.

Hebrews 4:14-16 NIV

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

You see, Jesus knows what it is like to be a human. He was born on this earth, lived, walked, talked on this earth. And died. He will intercede on our behalf when we approach God's throne. One of the most significant Scriptures to me is Matthew 10:32-33

Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

That has always made such sense to me. If I want Jesus to stand up for me, I need to stand up for him.

I have confidence in that statement. I believe that statement. I have faith in that statement.

It's a small seed, but it's a powerful one, because from that Scripture, we can really start really following Christ. Entering his life, his light, and leaving our selfish ways behind us, as we ask for his mercy and grace, which leads us directly to God's mercy and grace.

Now there are a lot of things that weigh us down on this earth. Things that get in our way. Literally weigh us down until we can hardly stand. Baggage. Emotional

baggage. Baggage baggage. Jesus said to his disciples. 'Come follow me.' and they did. They stopped their lives and started a new life in Christ.

What do we have that is weighing us down, and preventing us from following Christ as quickly as we can? Is it your past? Maybe it's your present circumstances... maybe it's both.

Remember the ghost of Christmas past in Scrooge? He was weighed down by chains of his own making. Each link a moment in his life when he made the wrong decision, the wrong choice. Collectively, those decisions, those choices, led to sin. Separation from God. He wasn't running anywhere... his spirit was not free, it was encumbered with sorrow. He was weighed down.

So what are the decisions the choices we can make that will give us freedom, peace, and life in Christ?... John Wesley had four main ingredients to his recipe for spiritual wholeness. They are called the Wesleyan quadrilateral. Think of a chair with four legs. Each leg is vital to the success of the chair. Are you going to try and sit down on a chair with three legs, or two, or one. No. You need them all to have the confidence, the trust, the faith in that chair, that it will bear your weight. Just as we need confidence and trust in God's forgiveness and grace to develop our faith. He will not let us crash to the ground, unsupported..

John Wesley's four parts to exploring the reality, presence and purposes of God were:

Scripture, relying on its authority as being God breathed. Inspired by God. Psalm 119 'Your Word is a lamp before my feet, and a light for my journey'

Reason. The use of our critical thinking to sort out priorities and evaluate our experiences in the light of our beliefs.

We believe that the invisible God is made visible in Jesus Christ. If we apply his teachings and model his life, then we are going to be moving forwards in life, with confidence.

Tradition: What has been decided and understood in the past, can help us decide and understand today how to move forward in faith. Coming each Sunday to think, learn and grow together is a vital ingredient in our identity. The disciples grew together, learned together.

Experience. Our personal experiences as we go through the journey of life. The opportunity to learn from our mistakes, to see the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and to recognize that when we decide to follow Christ, *a whole new spirit centred world opens up to us.*

Each time you sit down, you trust that chair. In the same way, think of faith.

But let's take it one step further. Don't just think of a chair. Think of a throne. The throne of God. Strong. Enduring. Majestic. Significant.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

God's throne of grace is available to all. Follow Christ, and he will lead you there, and acknowledge you there in the presence of his Father.

And on the journey to the throne of grace, let us meet at the Lord's table shortly, remembering what Christ did for us so many years ago. Think of the thousands of Christians that have taken communion here in this church over the 175 years of its existence, and take the bread and wine in faith. Psalm 23 says I am the good shepherd, says the Lord. You are my sheep. *Goodness and mercy shall follow you all of your days, and you, if you follow me... will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Let us pray

Jesus, I trust in you, that you are God's Word in the flesh. I trust that you are the light of the world. Illuminate my darkness. Help me to walk in your light and to love and follow you all of my days. In your holy name. Amen.