

I Just Gotta Know!

“So we are always of good courage ... for we walk by faith, not by sight” 2 Corinthians 5:6-7.

I just gotta know! I have to know how things will turn out! I can't be left hanging like this! I just gotta know! Some of us have thought or uttered these words as we've dug into a real page turner of a book. We can't put the book down until we've made it through to the end. Others of us have felt this way when our current, binge show comes to that seasonal cliffhanger. We've got to watch the next episode right away even if it means sacrificing sleep.

Families do this with babies. Sometimes there comes that moment when the couple can't wait any longer, they have to know, are they having a girl or a boy?! Truly, all kinds of news work this way! Anticipated phone calls or meetings with doctors. Expected letters from schools or internships. Contacts from potential businesses and employers. We want to get to the results as soon as possible! Minimal waiting is ideal! And if we have to wait then knowing and seeing each step of the process leading to the end goal is so desirable!

With both work and play, we prefer to have the control of knowing how things are going to work out. To be completely clear and honest, that doesn't mean simply knowing the beginning and the end, we like to have the information for how something is going to get from A to Z. We expect and insist on knowing B through Y too!

While this might be our desire in a perfect world, this doesn't always happen. Many times, we don't get our way. We don't get to know. We can't see how things will turn out. We're left hanging. And this lack of knowledge and control can be discouraging.

We run into this struggle with God's kingdom and His promises. We hear about the reality of God's kingdom and His promises from the Bible. His kingdom and promises are proclaimed here at church as real. The problem is that God's kingdom and promises so often appear to have no real and immediate impact in this world or in our own lives. We believe that God's kingdom and His promises are real and true, but we grow discouraged because we can way more easily point to the lack and absence of God's kingdom and promises than to their perceived effectiveness.

I don't need to tell you how discouraging it is to witness the conflict between Russia and Ukraine or between Palestine and Israel! Add to the mess, our own country, especially as we head towards November! Even more acute discouragement impacts us through the decisions of friends and loved ones, particularly when their choices mock and reject the very kingdom and promises of God we're so hopeful and prayerful to share with them! Perhaps nothing makes discouragement hit any closer to home than when our own bodies betray us forcing us to give up the most personal control and leaving us in a realm with great lack of knowledge.

From the international to the personal, these kinds of discouragements make us want God to reveal His process. We know the A and Z of God's kingdom and His promises from the Bible, can't He clue us into B through Y? How's He going to bring forth His work through nations at war who despise each other? Can He work through our nation's confusion? Will He really work to bring His erring sheep, even our friends and loved ones, back into His fold? Does He truly have a plan and purpose for us still when our bodies limit the plans and purposes we've grown used to? We just gotta know God! Don't leave us hanging!

Jesus said, **“The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But**

when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” (*Mark 4:26-29*)

Our Lord and Savior doesn't leave us hanging. He may not tell us all we want to know, but He clearly tells us what we need to know. God's kingdom and His promises are going to be effective. They are going to work even though we won't be able to explain the process step-by-step of how they'll work. Like the sower who sows seed without knowing the step-by-step process leading to the seed's produce, so too for us with God's kingdom and His promises. The kingdom and promises of God will produce by themselves without our expert knowledge and control even in the midst of adverse circumstances we experience this side of heaven.

With these words, Jesus removes our discouragement at focusing on seeing results develop in real-time and replaces it with encouragement focused on the patient delivery of God's kingdom and promises that will be effective even though you and I might not be able to measure its success in our present moment. With these words, Jesus seems to tell us, dear anxious children of God, what you gotta know is this, my word and work have the step-by-step process covered. Remain focused on what I've given you in the seeds of the Scriptures and Sacraments for they deliver to you the A and Z of my kingdom and promises while I continue to take care of B through Y.

For in the seeds of the Scriptures and Sacraments, we receive assurance that transforms our discouragement into encouragement. For Jesus has already worked through warring nations, even His own chosen nation of Israel, to bring about salvation for the world. Through His death at the hands of His own people warring and rebelling against Him, He brought peace with God. By His resurrection, Jesus brought restoration to His flock, even to such sinners as you and me, whom He now calls His friends and loved ones. Through the suffering, pain and wounds He endured, Jesus revealed the purpose and plan He can produce even from such a betrayed and battered body.

It's these results and accomplishments of Jesus that the seeds of the Scriptures and Sacraments plant into us, so that like Paul, we might be confident in saying, **“So we are always of good courage ... for we walk by faith, not by sight.”** (*2 Corinthians 5:6-7*) Yes, even in the face of situations and circumstances that make it seem like God's kingdom and promises are increasingly ineffective we need not become discouraged. Rather, we remain encouraged because through His Word and gifts we carry within our bodies and souls the very victory Christ has won for us. We remain encouraged that our Lord and Savior Jesus who ascended, who is over all and in all, is in control even now. We remain encouraged in the midst of these lingering battles because our victorious Lord Jesus is returning to share with us, His forgiven and loved family, the spoils of the war He has already won.

Encouraged by our Lord's victory delivered to us in the seeds of Scripture and Sacrament, the Lord will bring others into His kingdom and promises as the courage and hope God pulls out of us even in these challenging times leads others to say I gotta know why they are the way they are even in the face of such turmoil. And without us knowing how, the Lord will use us as a part of His B through Y process of producing His kingdom and promises in the world around us. In and through the Seed of the Woman, that is in and through our Savior Jesus, may we always be of good courage as He leads us to walk by faith and not by sight. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan