



SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE
FOR ALL SAINTS SMALL GROUPS

“Like Jesus: Faithfulness in an Age of Self-Protection” | Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt | Nov. 8, 2020

OLD TESTAMENT READING

2 Samuel 9:3-10

And the king said, “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?” Ziba said to the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet.” ... 5 Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. 6 And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, “Mephibosheth!” And he answered, “Behold, I am your servant.” 7 And David said to him, “Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always.” 8 And he paid homage and said, “What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?” 9 Then the king called Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said to him, “All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master’s grandson. 10 And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master’s grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master’s grandson shall always eat at my table.”

EPISTLE READING 1 John 1:5-2:6

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us

Introduction

The Fruit of the Spirit characterize God’s very life, so faithfulness is an essential characteristic of God Himself. There is no question of God’s faithfulness: He will bring us to Himself if we embrace Him in our hearts. Our own faithfulness has to do with follow-through, with keeping on keeping on. We partake of God’s Spirit when we are faithful.

What faithfulness means

The Truth--not our, your, my, or a truth, but The Truth--speaks to the fallacy of “relative truth.” The recent shift in language to allow for a truth other than absolute, exclusive truth poses a question: is faithfulness possible without The Truth? Truth has been something that possesses us, not something that we possess or something dependent upon an individual’s viewpoint. John made clear that what man says is not the same as Truth (1 John 1:6,8,10 “we say”), and then he tells us The Truth. People confuse their desires, which change constantly, with the truth; but we need something unchanging in which to root our promises.

“God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” 1 Jn 1:5b.
“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Light, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” James 1:17.

If we know Jesus, we will be like Him. We will be possessed by The Truth, too, and we will not change when circumstances or feelings change.

Why does faithfulness fail?

Three untruths in 1 Jn 1:6,8,10—do we do these things and make God out to be a liar? The Serpent is the father of lies. His two lies to Eve in Genesis cast doubt on God’s word: “Did God really say?” and “You will not surely die” Gen 3:1, 4. All of our sins are related to this first sin—believing lies. At some point we come to believe that something other than God will satisfy us—careers, success, money, romance, sex, family,

from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. 1 Peter 4:8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

GOPEL READING Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

politics—so we worship it, and that thing becomes an idol. Ultimately, we become like our idols.

When we worry, we believe a lie. "If I were in charge of the world, everything would be better." We are worried that God won't get it right. We treat God every day as though He is the liar and the world is telling us the truth. We take our eyes off God and look around us for validation.

How faithfulness works

The story of Jesus in Matthew 14 shows a picture of faithfulness to the unfaithful. The sea symbolizes change, danger, and chaos, but in the midst of Peter's unfaithfulness, Jesus is faithful to save him and us. The adverb "earnestly" in 1 Peter 4:8 derives from the Greek verb for stretching out (*ekteinas*). When we love one another earnestly (stretched out), we love as Jesus loves. When we change the focus of our gaze, as Peter took his eyes off Jesus, we see the waves and the wind, but Jesus never takes his eyes off us and never stops stretching out to us.

Like Mephibosheth, we bring nothing to the table, but God is faithful. He will seek us and find us, then provide for us.

Discussion

1. How has Jesus stretched out to you? Remember these times and consider them war stories to return to again and again to support your faithfulness.
2. What tempts you to look away from Jesus? Consider "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (I Jn 2:16) in your answer.
3. Check through all the references to God's faithfulness in the Scriptures. Just for a start, try I Cor 10:13, Heb 3:6, and II Thes 3:3.
4. Consider areas in which faithfulness is hard. What would faithfulness demand of you when these areas try you? Be specific.
5. What can you do to remind yourself of God's faithfulness? Jesus gave the disciples a visual lesson in Matt. 14. Samuel set up a stone and called it Ebenezer to remind the Israelites of God's faithfulness. Do you have an Ebenezer?