

The Promise of Faithfulness

Presented By Pastor Scott Walters on 01/19/20

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

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Some years ago, Jane and I spent a long weekend in St. Louis,
Missouri. In July! I think the overnight low temperature was
95 degrees and the humidity was about the same.

On the way home, we went up along the Mississippi River on the
Missouri side. We stopped in Hannibal, Missouri – the
boyhood home of Mark Twain.

The house was kept up well enough. It was on the Main Street in the
middle of a town that I think had less than 10,000 residents.

I've gone into a lot of historic homes. Some huge and some modest or
meagre. For whatever reason, I wasn't impressed with Mark
Twain's boyhood home.

I couldn't help but wonder, how many visitors to see Twain's
hometown, have ever read anything by Mark Twain. Or the
home or grave of any famous literary figure.

I suppose one could say the same thing about the followers of Jesus.

They may visit the shrine, but ignore the teachings of Christ.

But things can change when a person makes an effort to
discover what are on those pages in the scripture
and how the ideas on those pages can
offer direction for a person's life.

Those same ideas on those same pages make a difference on the way
we live our lives and how we give of ourselves to a world in
need. Instead of only seeing ourselves as being

constantly bombarded with requests of support –

Jesus shows us a way in which our
whole lives can be a way of
bringing his words to life
in the 21st century.

Today's scripture from First Corinthians is intriguing because it says,
that everything to the contrary, GOD IS FAITHFUL.

I can remember a former parishioner who unexpectedly wound up in
the hospital and after surgery told me that it was as though the
clutter of the everyday was cleared away and what was
left was God staring him in the face. "God was
undoubtedly there the whole time, but I
couldn't see Him."

What happened to Charlie doesn't happen all the time, but it does
happen. More often, God works through the lives of the
people around us.

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It happens in today's passage. Paul told the Christians in Corinth about God's faithfulness to them – in spite of the fact that later in the letter he is going to have to go through a laundry list of problems facing the Corinthian congregation.

There was no dramatic thunderbolts from God. A simple reminder by Paul, that God is faithful even though we aren't all the time.

My guess is that most of us met Jesus in this way – through the example and witness of others. It may have been the influence of one of our parents or grandparents, a spouse, or close friend.

We may have come to see Jesus more clearly through a Sunday School teacher or camp counselor or church member. Or maybe it was the witness of all of these together.

And what does Jesus do? He offers a personal invitation. He says, "Come and see." He speaks to them. He opens the door for what will be the beginning of an unbelievable relationship.

When we say "yes" to Jesus, we, too, begin a journey of spiritual discovery and discipleship that will lead us to the heart of God.

This weekend we honor the witness of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He is a powerful example of one who saw Jesus even more clearly at the end of his life than at the beginning.

When he began his ministry, he had youthful enthusiasm and strong convictions. His father was an outstanding preacher and he been brought up well. And yet, after years of walking in Jesus' footsteps, he became truly captivated by the spirit of Christ.

Two months before his assassination, he spoke to his congregation at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta about his death. He said: "Every now and then I think about my own death, and I think about my own funeral. If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get some people to deliver my eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. Every now and then I wonder what I want them to say. Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize – that's not important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards – that's not important.

"I'd like someone to mention that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his live serving others. I'd like someone to be able to say that Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to love somebody. I want you to be able to say that I did try to feed the hungry. I want you to be able to say that I did try to clothe those who were naked. I want you to be able to say that I did try to visit those in prison. I want you to be able to say that I tried to love and serve humanity. I won't leave any money left behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind."

Martin Luther King, Jr. in saying "yes" to Jesus, that invitation was offered to others through him. The same thing will happen to you when you walk in Christ's footsteps, and share

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Christ's love, and invite others!

John Wesley Watts, who lived in West Virginia in the nineteenth century, wrote his own epitaph as he lay dying. The words were engraved on his tomb.

'John Wesley Watts: A firm Believer in Jesus Christ, Jeffersonian Democracy and the Methodist Episcopal Church.'

Great convictions! But those are convictions, not faith. Faith is more like the witness of Phillips Brooks that great Boston preacher; writer of the hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," when he said, "I think I am a Christian because of my aunt, who lives in Teaneck, New Jersey."

If I have faith, it is because I have met faith; I have seen it in action. And this faith is never a vague, pie-in-the-sky kind of thing. Heaven is not good because life is bad; the quality of our lives while we live them is preparation for heaven.