

INI - SDG

4th Sunday in Lent

March 14, 2010

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla, SD

Text: Deuteronomy 7:6-11 *“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.”*

Theme: THE FAITHFUL GOD

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

What is it that keeps you awake at night? Maybe you are worried about something going on in your family. Someone’s health is failing. The bills are piling up. Your teenage son won’t talk to you anymore. Maybe you are kept awake because you are worried about a test you have to take tomorrow. You know you had plenty of time to prepare for it, but you did not take advantage of the time you were given. Whatever the case may be, there is uncertainty in your life and it burdens your mind.

Well what about your relationship with God? Do you ever worry about that? Maybe you worry that God could never accept you because of the things you have done. Maybe there is a particular sin that continues to bother you. Maybe you continue to find yourself committing the same sins over and over again, and think that such behavior is not the behavior of a child of God. Maybe you worry that your faith is not strong enough. Maybe you worry that you are not a good enough Christian.

We have moments when we struggle with our faith. Part of the problem is that at such times we tend to become introverted. That is we focus on ourselves - our lives and our conduct to see what sort of Christian we have been. When we do that we begin to see the cracks and gaps in our Christian lives caused by sin. And the further we dig the more sin we find. And the more sin we find the further we feel from God.

When we struggle and despair about our faith and lives, the LAST place we should be looking is to ourselves. Instead when we are worried and distraught about our faith and our relationship with God, we need to hear from God Himself on the matter. We need to hear not about ourselves, but about Him and His work to save us. We need to focus on the Gospel and

find our comfort and strength there. We need to hear that our God is FAITHFUL. So let us, then, consider the faithfulness of our God.

That word “faithful” is one that makes us cringe a little, doesn’t it. It makes us cringe because we know far too much personal experience with unfaithfulness. We are reminded of our friends’ ex-husband who tore apart a happy home by his unfaithfulness. We are reminded of those times we promised our parents we would take out the garbage, but we were not faithful to our parents in doing so. We are reminded of those times when we promised our children we would take them out for ice cream, but we were not faithful in keeping our promises.

In the season of Lent we hear a great deal about unfaithfulness. We think of the Jewish Council that was not faithful to their Jewish faith and condemned their Messiah to death. We think of Pilate who, though he knew the right and just thing to do, was not faithful as a judge. He knowingly condemned an innocent Man to death. We think of Jesus being arrested and His friends running away and abandoning Him. And we think of Peter. Peter who said he would rather die than deny his Lord. Yet when confronted by a lowly servant girl, Peter was unfaithful to His Lord.

On the other hand, during Lent we see the greatest example of faithfulness in Jesus. Jesus had always been faithful to His Father in everything He did. This is especially true on Good Friday. It was His Father’s will that Jesus lay down His life to ransom sinful man from hell. And Jesus was faithful even in this. He was **“obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”** (Phil 2:8b)

How could it be any other way? How could Jesus be anything BUT faithful? Jesus is true God and God is faithful. Moses says in our text, **“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy.”** Everything God says He’s going to do, He does. He has to! God cannot do anything BUT be faithful. When God promised Adam and Eve that from the Seed of the woman a Savior would come, it was as good as done. When God promised Abraham that He would make him into a great nation, though at the time he was only one man and childless, it was only a matter of time. Soon the great nation of Israel would return from Egypt and conquer Canaan. God is faithful who keeps covenant and mercy.

But God is also faithful when He threatens to punish. Verse 10, **“He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.”** God is not some sort of doting father who winks at the sinful behavior of his children. Those who hate Him, He will destroy. He is not slack in carrying out His faithfulness in such matters. Those who hate Him will face His wrath and judgment. God is faithful when it comes to His promises and His threats.

While there are many examples of God’s faithfulness in the Bible, certainly the history of the Children of Israel clearly shows that God is faithful in keeping both His promises and His threats. There were times in the Wilderness when the Children of Israel showed that they hated God. They grumbled against Him and His representative Moses, saying that they were better off slaves in Egypt. And because they hated God many of them were destroyed in the Wilderness and were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Some were swallowed by the earth, some were killed by poisonous serpents, and others died from plagues. God showed that He was faithful when it came to His threats of punishment.

But the mere fact the Children of Israel even existed as a nation is a clear demonstration

that God is faithful in keeping even the most improbable promises. When God chose Abraham to bear the promise of Seed of the Savior and make a great nation out of him, Abraham was but one man. And more than that, he was an old man without any children. But to this one, old man, God swore that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the heaven and the sand on the seashore. At the time there were countless nations which the LORD could have chosen. Great and powerful nations. But as is the case with God, He chooses ***“the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty...and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence”*** (1 Cor 1:27-29) This act of grace in choosing the Children of Israel to be His own people, ***“a special treasure above all the peoples on the earth,”*** was a demonstration of God’s faithfulness.

The entire Old Testament is a lesson on the faithfulness of God. Every promise and every threat He made He kept.

Yet what does this have to do with us and our struggle with faith? How does this help us with our doubts and fears? Well, dear Christian, God has not changed and He cannot change! ***“Know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God.”*** We see His faithfulness especially in Jesus. It was our Savior Jesus that for 4,000 years God had promised would come. And at the fulness of the time He was born. Both Mary and Zacharias recognized the birth of Jesus as a fulfillment of the promises God had made to their fore-fathers.

But Jesus shows the faithfulness of God in even more amazing ways. In the psalms David wrote that God would not allow His holy one to see corruption. (Ps 16:10) Peter points out that David was not writing of himself because David died, was buried, and his body returned to dust and ashes. David was writing of Jesus. God would not allow the body of Jesus to see corruption. Jesus promised the same thing when He told His disciples that He would suffer and die in Jerusalem, but on the third day He would rise again. Now, try to imagine making this promise yourself and keeping it! It would be another example of our unfaithfulness. None of us could bring our own dead bodies back to life. Yet Jesus said it would happen and it did! Jesus who was dead and buried on Friday, was risen and alive on Sunday! This is the faithful God who keeps His promises.

If Jesus rose from the dead, what does that mean for us? It means all the other promises God has made He will faithfully keep. When God says, ***“(Jesus) was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification,”*** (Rom 4:25) what does that mean? It means Jesus pay the price for our sins and His resurrection means we stand not guilty in God’s sight. God is faithful!

John writes in his first epistle, ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”*** (1 Jn 1:9). Now does this mean that if we confess our sins that God will forgive and cleanse us from SOME of our sins? NO! God is faithful, if He says He will forgive and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness than that means ALL unrighteousness!

Our entire salvation is dependant on the faithfulness, not of us, but of God. If God is faithful then every promise in Scripture He has to and will keep. When Jesus says, ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved,”*** (Mk 16:16) you can take it to the bank! He who believes in Jesus and is baptized will be saved! And even if we struggle with our own faithfulness to God, God Himself promises us in 2 Timothy, ***“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”*** (2 Tim 2:13) Our weakness cannot cause God to change. He cannot be

anything BUT faithful.

When you struggle with your faith, when doubts assail you, turn your focus away from your sinful heart and to your faithful God. Stand beneath the cross of Calvary and see the Lamb of God laying down His life. Did Jesus die? Then God is faithful and all your sins have been paid for. Run to the empty tomb on Easter. Is Jesus still in the tomb? If He is, we have every reason to be afraid. God was faithful in raising His Son to life, just as He said He would. Our sin and guilt has been removed forever. ***“Know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God.”*** Praise be to our faithful God! Amen.