



A SERMON BY
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THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JULY 17, 2016

PATIENCE

JOHN 3:2 “BELOVED, NOW WE ARE THE SONS OF GOD AND IT DOETH NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE: BUT WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM, FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.”

WILLIAM BARCLAY: “WHEN CHRIST APPEARS, WE SHALL SEE HIM AND BE LIKE HIM. THE CHRISTIAN GOAL IS THE VISION OF GOD. BUT THAT VISION IS NOT FOR THE SAKE OF INTELLECTUAL OR THEOLOGICAL SATISFACTION, IT IS IN ORDER THAT WE MAY BECOME LIKE HIM. WE HAVE DIFFICULTY SEEING HIM UNLESS WE ARE PURE IN HEART: HEAR THE ILLUMINATION OF THIS PASSAGE FROM THE SCOTTISH PARAPHRASE.

“BEHOLD THE AMAZING GIFT OF LOVE THE FATHER HATH BESTOWED ON US TO CALL US SONS OF GOD.”

1. CONCEALED AS YET THIS HONOUR LIES, BY THIS DARK WORLD UNKNOWN; A WORLD WE KNEW NOT WHEN HE CAME, EVEN GOD’S ETERNAL SON.

2. HIGH IS THE RANK WE NOW POSSESS, BUT HIGHER WE SHALL RISE; THOUGH WHAT WE SHALL HEREAFTER BE.

3. OUR SOULS WE KNOW WHEN HE APPEARS SHALL BEAR HIS IMAGE BRIGHT, FOR ALL HIS GLORY FULLY DISCLOSED SHALL OPEN TO HIS SIGHT.

4. A HOPE SO GREAT AND SO DIVINE, MAY TRIALS WELL ENDURE AND PURGE THE SOUL, FROM SIN AND SIN AS JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF IS PURE.

THIS PREFACE LEADS US INTO SOMETHING MANY HAVE WISHED TO DISCUSS FOR SOME TIME: OVER THE COURSE OF OUR TIME TOGETHER WE HAVE SHARED MANY OF THE ISSUES WHICH LEAD US TO THE VISION OF CHRIST AND WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO EVEN BELIEVE IN OR FAITH. AS I PREPARED THIS SERMON, I EASILY FOUND THIRTY REQUIREMENTS OF OUR ATTEMPTS TO BE LIKE CHRIST. I NAME JUST A FEW:

1. PATIENCE
2. LOVE
3. HUMILITY
4. THE TRUTH
5. LIVE WITH GOD'S GRACE
6. CARING
7. TRUST
8. PRAYER
9. GIVING
10. HONESTY

THE SCRIPTURE, THE PREACHER, THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE BIBLE, ALL HAVE TOUCHED OUR THOUGHTS IN A LIVING AND A GROWING FAITH. WE HAVE SHARED THE IDEA OF A SELF EVALUATION:

1. DO WE CARE WHERE WE ARE IN THE FAITH?
2. DO WE WANT TO GROW?

3. HOW IMPORTANT DO WE THINK OUR FAITH IS?
4. DO WE PRAY?
5. I BELIEVE THAT A REGULAR LOOK AT OURSELVES AND OUR FAITH IS CRUCIAL.

BUT LETS BE REALISTIC, IF I SHARE GOD’S LOVE AND THE VARIOUS THINGS HE URGES US TO EMBRACE; IF YOU STUDY THE BIBLE AS IT HELPS US TO GROW; IF WE ASK QUESTIONS OF OTHERS; IF WE PRAY TO OUR GOD WITH OUR GOALS AND OUR FRUSTRATIONS, ARE WE DOING ENOUGH TO MEET GOD’S STANDARDS FOR US? I WONDER!

1. PATIENCE: HOW IMPORTANT IS OUR PATIENCE WITHIN OUR FAITH, OUR FRIENDS, OR WORK. DO WE PRACTICE MORE PATIENCE THAN WE HAVE BEFORE?

JOHN WESLEY, THE FOUNDER OF METHODISM, USED TO RECALL THAT AS A YOUTH HIS BEHAVIOR OFTEN DISPLEASED HIS FATHER. HIS MOTHER WAS MORE FORBEARING. “HOW CAN YOU HAVE THE PATIENCE,” EXPLODED THE ELDER WESLEY, “TO TELL THAT BLOCKHEAD JOHN THE SAME THING TWENTY TIMES OVER?”

“WHY,” REPLIED MRS. WESLEY, “IF I HAD TOLD HIM BUT NINETEEN TIMES I HAD WASTED MY BREATH.”

2. LOVE: DO WE REALLY LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR? PART OF THE GREAT COMMISSION SAYS WE MUST. BUT IT MAY NOT BE EASY. OUR NEIGHBOR MAY HAVE DIFFERENT STANDARDS, MAY BE SHORT ON BEING NICE TO PEOPLE, SIMPLY HE/SHE MAY NOT CARE ABOUT BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS. BUT ARCHBISHOP TUTU PUT IT THIS WAY: SOCIAL HARMONY IS OF THE GREATEST GOOD; IT KEEPS US IN THE FAITH THAT IS STRONG.

3. CARING: ARE WE CARING FOR OTHERS IN OUR LIVES? PERHAPS WE CAN'T CARE FOR EVERYBODY BUT DO WE HAVE A PERSON OR PERSONS WHO NEED CARING? WE ALL SHOULD HAVE SUCH A PERSON IN OUR LIFE AND FAITH. YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OR READ ABOUT WHAT OUR CHURCH SCHOOL SEEKS TO DO. THEY HAVE CHOSEN THE CARING PATH. MANY OF OUR PEOPLE ARE HELPING THEM. BUT HOW MANY OF NEGLECT OTHERS.

4. HUMILITY: I WOULD BELIEVE THAT EACH OF US KNOWS A PERSON WHO IS THE ABSOLUTE OPPOSITE OF HUMILITY. "I KNOW THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING —NOT JUST IN MY FIELD OF WORK BUT ASK ME A QUESTION ON ANYTHING AND I SHALL GIVE YOU THE ANSWER." AREN'T WE SOMETIMES LIKE THAT? I HOPE NOT AND RATHER THAN SAYING ALL OF US ARE LIKE THIS AT TIMES. WE VOW TO FIX SUCH AREAS IN OUR LIVES.

GOD TELLS US THAT ALL THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FAITH CAN BE DIFFICULT OR WORSE AND AT TIMES, HARD TO BEAR. BUT OUR GOD AND HIS SON HAVE LAID DOWN SOME IMPORTANT GUIDELINES FOR THE FAITH WE LIVE, NOT JUST IN THIS PLACE BUT WHEREVER WE MAY BE. HOW DO WE HANDLE SUCH TOUCH SITUATIONS? WE PRAY FOR THE STRENGTH TO OVERCOME THE IMPEDIMENTS WE FIND IN OUR FAITH. WE THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT OUR NEXT STEPS. WE READ AND INGEST SCRIPTURE WHICH HELPS PUT US ON THE RIGHT TRACT TO SATISFY NOT JUST GOD BUT OURSELVES AS WELL.

FINALLY, WE ASK OURSELVES THE TOUGHEST OF ALL QUESTIONS: "ARE WE WORKERS AND BELIEVERS IN THE FAITH?" SURE WE SAY, WE'RE IN CHURCH, WE'RE IN THE PULPIT; WE'RE IN THE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM; WE GO TO SOCIAL HOUR;

WE WORK AT VARIOUS PROJECTS. ALL OF THESE ARE IMPORTANT AND THANK GOD FOR OUR INVOLVEMENT. BUT THE ROAD GOD PUT IN FRONT OF US IS NOT AN EASY ONE. NOR WAS JESUS DEALING WITH AN EASY SITUATION. HIS ARREST AND CRUCIFIXION WERE NOT SIMPLE STEPS.

GOD KNOWS WE CANNOT FULLY MEET EVERY REQUIREMENT. BUT OUR COMMANDMENT IS TO STRIVE TO GET BETTER IN THE FAITH WE POSSESS. GOD WILL BE PATIENT WITH US. HE DEEPLY LOVES US, HE EXUDES HUMILITY AND HIS EXAMPLES SPUR US ON; GOD IS THE MAGNIFICENT CARETAKER WHO LEADS US. ARE WE WITH HIM?

I CONCLUDE WITH A STORY ABOUT ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND HIS SECRETARY OF WAR, EDWIN STANTON. NO ONE TREATED LINCOLN WITH MORE CONTEMPT THAN DID STANTON, WHO DENOUNCED LINCOLN'S POLICIES AND CALLED HIM A 'LOW CUNNING CLOWN.' STANTON HAD NICKNAMED HIM "THE ORIGINAL GORILLA" AND SAID THAT EXPLORER PAUL DU CHAILLU WAS A FOOL TO WANDER ABOUT IN AFRICA TRYING TO CAPTURE A GORILLA WHEN HE COULD HAVE FOUND ONE SO EASILY IN SPRINGFIELD. LINCOLN SAID NOTHING IN REPLY. IN FACT, HE MADE STANTON HIS WAR MINISTER BECAUSE STANTON WAS THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB. HE TREATED HIM WITH MORE COURTESY THAN EVER. THE YEARS WORE ON. THE NIGHT CAME WHEN AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET STRUCK DOWN LINCOLN IN A THEATER. IN A ROOM OFF TO THE SIDE WHERE LINCOLN'S BODY WAS TAKEN, STOOD STANTON. AS HE LOOKED DOWN ON THE SILENT, RUGGED FACE OF THE PRESIDENT, STANTON SAID THROUGH HIS TEARS. "THERE LIES THE GREATEST RULE OF MEN THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN." AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT WAS DONE AT THE CORE...THE PATIENCE OF LOVE HAD CONQUERED IN THE END.