

# “Do We Have the Faith to Finish the Race?”

*The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – October 24, 2021*

*Mark 10:46-52*

A couple is getting married. The groom is watching his beautiful bride walk down the aisle. His thoughts turn to his love for her and how she makes him feel loved. He remembers how his life was before they met and now his life seems so complete. His whole future is laid out in such a way that he knows where he is going in life. Then he remembers that on this day he is going to make vows to pledge his love. That should be no problem by the way he is already feeling toward her. But he begins to worry. What if. . . ? And there are a thousand “what ifs” running through his mind. What if he loses his job? What if he is not able to provide? What if they can’t have the kids they wanted to have. He begins to doubt his future. He worries that she will be unhappy with him if any of the “what ifs” come true. He has lost faith in himself and in his future.

When we think about Stewardship, we face the same thing. We love Jesus and we recognize how much God has done for us. When God found us, we were lost. Now we are someone with a sense of direction and the knowledge that we are loved. When we think about Jesus, we are grateful for all the sacrifice Jesus went through on our behalf. We are happy to give. We want the whole world to know the joy we feel when we think about how much we are loved and blessed. We are so proud that our church has stepped up to serve the greater good as we feed the hungry and house the homeless. We love supporting God’s work even if we just give a little bit in the offering plate.

But just as the bride is walking down the aisle, we get a bit nervous when we are asked to fill out a pledge card. All the “what ifs” pop into our brains. What if we lose our job? What if we can’t give what we

pledged? What if our life circumstances change and not in a good way? We don't want to let God or the church down.

I want you to know that that fear is very real. I have felt that fear from time to time. I know so many others who have let the “what ifs” stop them from growing in their relationship with God. On Star Wars, the wise character Yoda says it this way, “Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.” - *Master Yoda*. And while many of you may think that quote is a bit over the top, trust me, each of those elements are felt by any follower of Christ, when we give in to fearing the future.

Why do I say that? Because we are a people of faith. We step out in faith and are called to continually grow in our faith as we learn to trust Jesus. Never has Jesus led us astray, but the world has. And too often we have allowed the world to have our ear in matters that we should be offering up to God. Who here has never doubted their faith? Who here has never listened to fear inside our heads and hearts only to watch it lead us to a place farther from God? Faith helps us walk with God and live as his disciples. Fear takes us away from God and it takes away all options that Jesus has on the table for us.

Oh, how we wish we could be like the blind beggar on the road to Jericho. How we wish we could just have the faith to cry out to Jesus and know that God will have mercy and give us what we want. We cry out but we have so little faith that God hears us or that he can even do anything to help us. Why? Because we have let the world whisper in our ears and tell us that we are in control. That life is just this way, and we must suffer through it. That it is all about us. Just like the people trying to call down the blind beggar, we will let the world quiet us. We let the world stop us from being who we were created to be because we are so afraid.

But what did we learn from this blind beggar? He was not afraid. He did not allow the world to shut him up. He continued to cry out and get Jesus' attention. He was going to do whatever it took. And when Jesus called for him, he asked him, "WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANT?" And he replied, "I WANT TO SEE AGAIN!" And immediately, his sight returned because of his faith.

Fear will never allow us to achieve what we need to achieve. Faith in ourselves and God will allow us to reach for the stars. Faith in God is the only way we can be his disciples. Disciples are not disciples who doubt the power of God. Disciples follow Jesus because they believe in him. What did Peter say when Jesus asked, "WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM? YOU ARE THE MESSIAH, THE HOLY ONE OF GOD!"

When we believe and have faith in God, yes there will always be fear. But faith allows us to overcome our fears and achieve our dreams. Faith in God allows God to open up to us the blessings that God has stored up for us. When we have faith, our hands are open, and God fills them with the things we need.

What is it that you want from God? What healing do you need God to perform in your life? What blessings do you need in order to bless others around you? That is the questions that we need to be asking ourselves. This is not a time to hold back. This is not a time to dream big but then ask for something small. We need to ask God for the things as large as we can dream. Does the beggar ask for new shoes or a better walking stick? No, he asks for the biggest thing he can think of, "I WANT TO SEE AGAIN!"

Stewardship renews our trust in God. There is something about giving up something so important in our lives, our resources, and giving them to God. But it is only in giving up our resources that we are forced to

trust in God to provide for us. And that is the only place where we will see God work. If we are not actively putting ourselves in a place where God can provide, how will we ever know that God is providing for us?

Faith demands that we step out first and then we can see that God is there. As our faith grows, our relationship with God also grows. Part of our discipleship must lead us down the road to trust and obey. Just as the hymn says:

And 'tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to take Him at His Word;  
Just to rest upon His promise,  
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord!"  
Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!  
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er;  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
Oh, for grace to trust Him more!  
Oh, Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Yes, being good stewards will come with many **challenges**. But our faith in God to provide, will also lead us to many **opportunities**. You always have two choices. You can live your life in fear of “what ifs” or you can have faith that Jesus knows your name and all that you need. If you live by the latter, then you can rest assured, that God will provide. Amen.