

FACING THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE

Trinity, Alamogordo

1 Thess. 1:1-5a

10-18-2020

“We remember before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. (1Thess. 3-5a)

There is a story of Satan asking his henchmen, **“What is the best way to destroy a Christian church?”** His henchmen made several suggestions to which Satan replied, **“Why put forth all that effort? Just get them to live as if there were no God. Get them to read other books as if there were no Bible. Keep them busy so they forget to pray. Move them to be concerned only with themselves and forget such nonessentials as compassion, pity, love and concern for others.”**

This story has some interesting comments, but we know that they are also very true. Today, we want to remember that we have been chosen by God to be the recipients of His love and forgiveness. We want to remember that not only do we receive forgiveness for our sins and peace through Christ, we also are given strength to live as Christ’s redeemed children. As we live in a world that is full of conflict and uncertainty, we can have confidence that everything will turn out for our good. That is God’s promise to the believers who trust in Him. We read that promise in **Romans 8:28** (ESV) **“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose”**. Some people interpret this the wrong way. They take it to mean that things should be the way they want them to be in this world. The Lord doesn’t mean that we won’t have troubles in this world. On the contrary, in John 16:33 we hear these words of Jesus, **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** Always remember, Christ has overcome the world!

Today’s message from the Epistle lesson is one that applies to all of us. It is a message to the Christians in Thessalonica reminding them that they have been chosen to receive blessings from God. We too, have been chosen to receive blessings from God. That is true both as individuals called to be God’s children and as a congregation. It is good that we take time to reflect on the fact that we, as God’s children, have been blessed as we work together to seek God’s will for His kingdom. That includes this Congregation called Trinity Lutheran Church.

Let us review the words of our text. **“ We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father**

your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.” (1 Thess 1-5a)

Remember I shared a few minutes ago that each of us were called. Here we see those words again, **“He has chosen you.”** Indeed He has! We sometimes forget that it was not our doing, but the love of God the Father through Christ Jesus that has set us free to be children of our Heavenly Father. We forget that we are sinners who were separated from God. No matter what we may have attempted to do, there was no way to set ourselves right with God, no way to earn or buy forgiveness. It was pure mercy and grace on God’s part that we were called. It continues to be God’s grace extended to us that gives us the wonderful ability to repent of our sins daily and to find complete forgiveness for all our sins. We find this forgiveness through faith in Jesus who died on the cross in our place. For us who find peace in knowing our sins are forgiven, we now want to share that good news. We are now called to tell others of the good news about Jesus.

It is at this point that we so often stumble. We forget that the Holy Spirit is present within us, that the Holy Spirit is our power, our source of Strength. We forget the message recorded in the epistle lesson from last week. It read, **“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”** (Phil 4:13) This verse is a great reminder that we are not going through this life alone, God is with us.

This congregation is known for its strong position of holding fast to the Word of God. Here again we see this parallel between the text, and us, when it says, **“our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.”** I pray that all of us here at Trinity Lutheran Church have a deep conviction that God’s Word is true, that it is the only foundation on which we can build. His Word is God speaking to us. Together, we believe that the Holy Spirit is our Guide, our Comforter and our Strength. It is because of this that we can, as our theme says, **“Face the Future with Confidence.”**

Looking to the future is very important as we seek to carry out God’s will on earth. As we do this, however, it is very important that we do so remembering our position relative to Christ and His will. You see, we are all members of the body of Christ and most of you are members of this congregation. As a result, the make up of the congregation is a lot like our personal lives.

Think about it, in our personal lives we so easily get caught up in the material and emotional things. We don’t always like the idea of submitting our lives to God because it may mean that we would have to abandon certain things in the process. It means that change

will take place and we don't always like change, especially if it isn't our idea. It is hard to accept the fact that God knows what is best for us in our lives. It is hard to accept that we aren't as wise as we sometimes think we are.

The same holds true for us in the congregation. Remember Paul's letter to the Corinthians when he said, "**Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.**" (1Cor. 12:27) Like the members of our body make up only one person, so is the congregation made up of many members, yet it is one body. What this means is that we are to work together in harmony to seek and to do that which the Lord would have us do. We are to serve the Lord in all situations, even in this Covid19 pandemic that we find ourselves in at the present time.

When we turn to the third chapter of Colossians we see this addressed. It reads, "**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**" (vs 12-14) This is a tall order for us. It is only by the grace of God that we are able to do this. Therefore, let us pray that God would shower us with His grace and enable us to show such love to each other, to Him, and to other people around us.

What does the future hold? I can not tell you that. What I can tell you is that for all people who remain faithful to our Lord and Savior, there is a promise. In James 1:12 we are told, "**Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.**" Again in the book of Revelation (2:10) we read, "**Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.**" This reference to a "**Crown of Life**" is a reference to living with our Lord in heaven where everything is perfect, where no sin exists. Rev 21, verses 3 and 4 explains this very well. It reads, "**And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'**"

When we evaluate these words, it is clear that for believers in Christ, "**the best is yet to come.**" In other words, I am telling you that it is our walk with God that is important. We must hold fast to the true Word of God. He is in control and He knows what is best. He promises us a wonderful future. Life with God is infinitely better than life on earth.

What we are to do is to remain faithful. How do we do that? We do it through a daily walk with Him. That involves many of the things mentioned in the reference from Colossians. Reading again from the third chapter of Colossians: **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.** (vs 15-17) This tells us we must feed on God’s Holy Word.

Remember the story of Satan and his henchmen at the beginning of this message? Satan is working very hard to get us to focus on the current pandemic and not on God’s Word. For many, their lives have changed in ways they don’t like. Satan would love to convince us that God does not care about us anymore.

That simply is not true. God does love you. He loves each one of us so much that He sent Jesus to die in our place and pay for all our sins. God keeps His promises. He not only promised us a Savior, Jesus has promised to never forsake us. Also, we have the Holy Spirit living in us. He guides, directs and prays for us. Knowing these things, spend time reading God’s Word each day, pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance and pray for a strong faith in our Triune God.

One word of caution. Don’t ever think that you can lift yourself up and strengthen your own faith. Only our loving God can do that. The good news is that God wants to lift us up into His loving arms forever. That is why He tells us to come to Him often in prayer. That is why He talks to us in His Holy Word,

Knowing this, let us not be neutral, let us not be idle, let us show the love of Christ in our daily lives, by what we say, by what we do, and by what we avoid. Yes, we will live in this world until our Lord calls us home, however, that does not mean that we need to live as the world does. We can live with Christ in our hearts and minds.

We have been called by God to be His children. Go in peace and share that wonderful news with others. We can **“face the future with confidence”** as we look forward to receiving that **“Crown of Life”** the Lord has promised us. Yes, for us who love God, **“The Best is Yet to Come.”** Amen

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all our understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen