

16TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 09/16/18

Mount Calvary, West View

ISAIAH 50: 4-10, JAMES 3: 1-12, MARK 9: 14-29

HYMNS: CHIEF OF SINNERS THOUGH I BE LSB #611,

PRAISE THE ONE WHO BREAKS THE DARKNESS LSB #849,

MY SOUL, NOW PRAISE YOUR MAKER LSB #820

Theme: I Believe, Help My Unbelief

+ Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN +

Our Text is from Saint Mark's Gospel, the 9th Chapter:

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

Whenever you run into a ñewö Born-Again Christian, you invariably get asked the question, ñAre you a believer?ö It gets worse, for when you say, ñOf course, I was baptized as an infant,ö they inquire you, ñBut are you a Christian? Do you Believe?ö I thought I made it quite clear that I am, so I try to help them out by explaining that I believe in infant baptism as the portal unto eternal life, and they counter with the statement, ñBut Jesus said you need to be baptized by fire!ö Have fun with them and blow their minds, for you can say, ñNo, John the Baptist said that. All Jesus said was baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Ghost.ö We know that John spoke the Word of God, and by default Jesus *did* in fact by being the Word of God say such, but just blow their circuits for a bit, for now we have entered the disbelief zone.

The disbelief zone is a strange place, not unlike the state of Limbo for the staunch Roman Catholic. When one finds themselves here, one may wonder if they truly do believe. They think they believe, they *want* to believe, but what they are hearing is not what they want to hear. When God says, ñThou Shalt notí öreality sinks in: God said noí I want to doí This makes me a sinner! Wretched man that I am! I

want to stop, but I keep doing the same things! There is no hope! I cannot save myself! We then turn to the Lord much as the father in our text, and say, *“If You, Lord, can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”* It was almost a wonderful Lutheran confession of faith. The problem was that little word ***IF***.

As James told us already, our tongue gets us into a myriad of trouble. With it we bless the Lord, and when we leave here we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. *“But they were being mean, and not at all Christlike!”* Does that give you the right to curse them? When you fail, and act less than lovingly towards your fellow man, especially Christians, are they allowed to curse you? When we put ourselves in another’s shoes, much as Paul did in our hymn that we opened our worship with, we find that we are much worse sinners than the people who seemingly sin against us. Some have said to illustrate my point, *“Do not point, for there are three fingers pointing at you.”* Pointed illustration I am sure, but we do not have to point to understand we are woefully short in obeying God and trusting Him above all things.

God tells us to trust in Him above ALL things. So whether we have been wronged by another, wronged by self, or just suffer under the sever weight of life that pushes us into the dark pit of depression and despair of God’s mercy, we need to be like this father in our text, acknowledge that we have not kept the wonderful Word of God in our heart, and have forgotten Isaiah 50, verse 10: ***Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of His servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*** This is the best advice for every person in distress. We should be good little Jews, and have Tefillin on foreheads and wrists - hey, let us really go nuts and buy-out Amazon, and have Tefilins on every exposed surface of the body! That way, we will always remember key verses, and how to speak rightly to our God and neighbor and we will not be caught with out tongues wagging and getting us in trouble all the time!

Oh, if only it were so easy! Jesus knows our frailty. He knows we cannot keep even one iota of

the law, let alone keep the whole of it. That is why He came Himself, born of the virgin, and lived that life that you cannot so that you can live. The father asked, *“If you can do anything..”* and Jesus seemed to react negatively to this comment. As well He should, for not only has He done *anything*, He will and has done, as we saw last week, ALL things ó well! He can take away your frailty in keeping the whole law; He can heal your broken spirit; He can stand you firm in the faith in the face of every weakness, for He sets your face like flint in the power of the Holy Ghost in you through faith in His redeeming act that allows you to move from this world to the next. You can stand firm in Jesus, for He has given you strength in His Word, Power in His forgiveness, and as an added bonus, other Christians to help you bear one another’s burdens.

I admit, this is the one thing I forget a lot. I have no problem assisting others with their burdens, for I truly do believe that my burdens are incredibly easy, and unbelievably light and can take on any and all burdens presented to me to assist others as needed. To me, the yoke of God is easy because I have an incredible faith given to me in the Word and I have trusted it all my days and continue to do so. I have seen and heard the mighty power of God and have no doubt He will continue to do even more amazing things until He comes again! Yet, as I travel this vale of tears He has given me my wife, my family, my congregation, my synod, and the Church Universal ó all as wonderful life companions to assist me on my life’s journey. I can rely on them as well as they can rely on me to get through this life in Faith and trust in God and His forgiveness. I mention this only to show you that you have a tremendous network of assistants to help you in any trouble, and it begins with the simple declaration of faith, *“I Believe; Help My Unbelief.”* There is no shame in understanding that our sins show unbelief in the time we commit them. The shame is when we deny they are there, or even need forgiveness. We have Word and Sacrament ministry and the forgiveness we receive from others to assist in the growth of faith.

The son and the father in our text were in great despair. Jesus showed them that faith heals all

wounds, for *all things are possible for one who believes.* You believe in your baptism, you believe in the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins. You trust in the Word to be the Word of God, and you have many people surrounding you in this house to assist you in your journey through this world to the next. Jesus' blood and righteousness breaks the darkness, frees the prisoners, heals all diseases. He is the living water that quenches all thirst for righteousness, and He is the Sword that drives away the demons. He is the Word incarnate, Who suffered in our place; rose victorious that we may know God by grace. Therefore, let us sing for joy and gladness, seeing what our God has done; praising the true Redeemer, He Who makes us one. In our Triune God's Name, we pray. **AMEN.**

+ AND NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN UNION WITH CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. AMEN+

There are only two days on my calendar...today and the day of judgment