

Trinity XII

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Date: 27 August 2023

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[0 : 0 0] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Please be seated. For many people, faith is a concept.

It is something that keeps people going when things don't make sense or when things go wrong. It doesn't really have any content. It is an empty and nebulous thing that floats somewhere in the universe that is accessed when it is needed.

How are we going to make enough money this month? Don't worry. Just have faith that things will work out. How do I know which career path I should choose?

Well, don't worry. Just have faith that it will work itself out. How do I know who will win the World Series? Well, don't worry. Just have faith that this year the Cubs will finally pull it together.

[1 : 0 3] In all of these examples, faith doesn't really have any grounding. It is a blind search through the dark, hoping to find what it is that we are looking for. Jesus' teaching, however, is completely different from this common understanding of faith.

According to Jesus, faith is a gift. A gift that radically reorients our way of life. In Ephesians, St. Paul tells us that our faith is a gift from God.

And that this faith is given so that we may do all the works that he has given for us to do. Our Gospel text today explains this reality through the healing of the deaf and mute man.

As Jesus is walking towards the Sea of Galilee, news reaches the Gentiles of the area that a miracle worker is coming. Some people in the area bring a deaf and a mute man to Jesus.

And he miraculously heals him of both his deafness and his speech impediment. Our Lord tells them to keep quiet about it, but they can't seem to keep quiet about it.

[2 : 1 1] They can't but help talk about the one who healed this deaf and mute man. It was a miraculous event that changed the life of the man who was healed and those who witnessed it forever.

Now we can understand the significance of this event when we think about our Old Testament lesson. In Isaiah 35, we read about how the Lord's promise was to restore Israel.

Isaiah 35 says, For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. In the habitation of jackals where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and with rushes.

This passage connects the healing of the deaf and the mute in Israel with the overflowing of water in places that are dry and destitute. When our Lord healed the deaf and the mute man, the man experienced the baptism of Jesus.

[3 : 34] When Jesus touched his saliva to the man's ears and tongue, he opened up his ears to hear the word of God, and he freed his mouth to praise God. He transferred him from the kingdom of darkness, death, and disease into the kingdom of life and light.

He gave him the gift of faith. This faith was a new allegiance to a new king. When we received our baptism, our ears were freed to hear the word of God, and our mouths were freed to respond in praise and in faith towards God.

The waters that overflowed in the desert in Isaiah are the waters of baptism that refreshed our dry and weary souls. And this man is not just one person in the historical account of the New Testament that is disconnected from the rest of our experience.

The experience of this deaf and mute man is the experience that we all share. Friends, we received something incredible in our baptism.

We received the seed of faith, a transferal of allegiance. We are no longer bound to follow after the ways of Satan's kingdom, those who live today with an empty and ephemeral kind of faith.

[4 : 55] On the contrary, we received an exorcism. This exorcism rid us of the need to treat faith as a concept that we just grasp onto when we find it convenient.

It gifted us with something that we could not create within ourselves. But even though this is the case, we are often tempted to place the faith that belongs to God into something else other than God.

We try in vain to place our faith in other people, in the politicians of our country, in the stock market, or whatever else you can think of.

This is the way of the world. When we are baptized, our faith has a content. And that content is Jesus Christ, not anything else.

Let us forsake the way of the world by rightly exercising our own faith. Let us, like those who saw the healing of the deaf and the mute man, use our faith to be a witness to the world rather than being consumed by the world.

[6 : 01] Let us see faith as an allegiance to our God and King rather than just a thing that we expect to provide us with good fortune and happiness. Truly fortunate and happy people are those who have devoted themselves in faith to God.

It's not the quick and easy way that we expect life to be. The world testifies to a quick and a cheap form of happiness. The happiness that we seek to attain is happiness with God.

And he has already given us the beginning of that happiness in baptism, which is our faith. Christ has come to begin a new creation, and he will return to see it through until it is completed.

Let us hold steadfast with faith in Christ rather than having faith in faith. Our ears have been unstopped and our tongues have been loosed.

Let us use them in service and in worship to our God. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.