

The Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity

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[0 : 00] St. Anselm, that famous Archbishop of Canterbury from the late Middle Ages, said that faith seeks understanding.

! Faith seeks understanding. One of the greatest examples of faith seeking understanding is when the angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her that she was with child even though she was a virgin. The messenger went on to say that Mary would give birth to the Messiah who is the Son of God. That announcement by the angel Gabriel concluded with Mary's incredible response. And Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to thy word. Faith seeks understanding.

Faith believes the word of God and then seeks to grow in that belief and in that understanding of that belief. Here in our gospel reading of John chapter 4 verses 46 through 54, we heard the story of Jesus being approached by a nobleman.

[1 : 17] In other words, our Lord encountered a man with great honor, great dignity, who also had great authority. He was a trusted leader in Herod's court.

This nobleman, respected and revered, now comes to our Lord desperate. Why? Because death was threatening not his life.

It was threatening the life of his son, who was very ill. This man came to Jesus in Galilee because he had heard of our Lord's previous miracle in that region at the wedding of Cana, where our Lord had changed water into wine.

This nobleman and father was concerned, so he asked our Lord for a miracle to heal his son. But our Lord provides a rebuke by saying, unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.

But this desperate father persisted as he asked our Lord for help. Jesus then said, go your way, your son lives.

[2 : 36] And we read that this nobleman and father did just that. In verse 50 here of John chapter 4, we heard those words. So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and he went away.

Did you catch that? This nobleman believed first and then he started heading back home to his son. There was no visible evidence.

There was no sign to tell him that his son was okay. That happened later. There was no lightning bolt or voice from the heavens that pronounced to this man that his son had been healed.

Jesus simply told this desperate father that his son would live. And this nobleman believed those words and he began his journey home.

He didn't beg. He didn't barter with God for some kind of verification or proof of healing before heading back to his family, to his son.

[3 : 48] No, he simply believed and he left. This is faith seeking understanding. And that lesson is for all of us this morning.

We are called to be like this nobleman, this father, to believe the word of God and then to get on with our lives, trusting in the Lord, trusting in the word of God.

We are called to believe and live our lives by faith. We are not to try and control or manipulate or even seek certainty in our lives.

We are called to simply believe. We are to echo those words of the Virgin Mary. Let it be done to me according to thy word.

Faith precedes our understanding. One day, God forbid, you might hear those dreaded words from your doctor saying that you or a loved one have cancer and it is spread.

[4 : 52] And so there's only a short time to live. But Jesus says in John chapter 11, verse 25, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

Do we believe this? Do we have faith that God will do what he promises to do? What he has said that he will do in the word of God?

Do we believe that promise that we will live with him forever? Do we believe that the world, which seems like it's spiraling totally into chaos, is in God's full control?

And that we need not worry about what tomorrow will bring. Do we believe that the Lord will never leave us? He will never forsake us.

Do we believe that God is present with us? Do we believe that God comes to us with the simple elements of water, bread, and wine?

[6 : 00] Faith seeks understanding. Faith precedes our knowledge and our experience because that's what faith is. Faith seeks understanding.

Faith seeks understanding. As the writer of Hebrews tells us, Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not yet seen.

We do not need signs or wonders because the greatest miracle, the greatest sign has already happened. The word of God has become flesh.

God has taken upon himself our humanity and dwelt among us. And Jesus has overcome sin and death in order to give us life.

And that is the only sign that really matters. God has come to meet us, to make himself known to us through the breaking of the bread.

[7 : 01] And we participate in this miracle of the Holy Eucharist each and every week. Therefore, we need to imitate this nobleman, this father, and make our way trusting in the word of God.

We need to imitate the Virgin Mary by saying, let it be done to me according to thy word. We need to be people who believe and trust in God above all things.

And be content to press forward. To live life. With the gaze upon Christ, who is our hope. And to do that in faith.

As our collect for today reminds us this morning, we are called to serve our God with a quiet mind. By living a life of faith.

A faith that continually seeks understanding. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.