

An old Scotsman operated a little rowboat for transporting passengers. One day one of the passengers noticed that the good old man had carved on one oar the word "Faith," and on the other oar "Works."

**Curiosity led him to ask the meaning of this.** The old man being a well-balanced Christian and glad of the opportunity for testimony, said, **"I will show you."** So, he dropped one oar and plied the other called Works, and they just went around in circles. Then he dropped the one called Works into the water and began to paddle with the one called Faith, and the little boat went around in circles. And then again---this time the other way around, but still in a circle. After this demonstration the old man picked up Faith and Works, and plying both oars together, sped swiftly over the water, explaining to his inquiring passenger, ***"You see that is the way it is in the Christian life. Dead works without faith are useless, and 'faith without works is dead' also, getting you nowhere. But faith and works pulling together make for safety, progress, and blessing."***

**Our reading today can be difficult for us to understand.** The disciples ask Jesus **to increase their faith**, and He says if you had faith the size of a mustard seed you would be able to say to this tree, be uprooted and throw yourself into the sea.

Then Jesus speaks about a servant doing his duty because that is his job to do with no praise or glory. He tells the disciples they must do their duty. But do not expect rewards, because you are doing what is expected of you no more or no less.

**Our duty, it seems to me is to live by faith in Jesus** and we perform that duty each day but ***we are not to expect praise or glory from God for that living, because that living is what is expected of us who have been saved through Christ.***

How do we unravel these words...so they can make sense to both you and me. Isn't the purpose of a Sunday Message to explain, to make alive the words of the Bible—**to bring it Alive, to help it apply to our everyday life.**

I would like to unravel these words this morning by sharing with you a poem written by Edgar Guest as found in a book called the, **"Doing the Gospel."** Keep these words in your mind this morning for they in a nutshell are a key to some understanding of these words of our Lord.

Guest says: **"I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day:.....I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell me the way.....The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear....Fine counseling is confusing but example's always clear.....And the best of all the preachers are the ones who live their creeds.....For to see good put into action is what every body needs.....I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done.....I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.....And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true,.....But I'd rather get lessons by observing what you do;.....For I might misunderstand you and the high advice you give....But there is no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.....When I see a deed of kindness, I am eager to be kind....When a weaker brother stumbles and a strong man stays behind...Just to see if he can help him, then the wish grows strong in me...to become a big and thoughtful as I know that friend to be.....And all travelers can witness that the best of guides today.... Is not the one who tells them but the one who shows the way.....One good person teaches many, people believe what they behold....One deed of of kindness noticed worth forty that are told.....Who stands with men of honor learns to hold his honor dear,.....For right living speaks a language which to everyone is clear....Though an able speaker charms with his eloquence I say..... .... **I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one, any day. "****

**Now please don't tune me out because the beginning list says, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.."** for what the author is speaking about is not listening to a sermon, **but that a Christian must not just talk the talk, but must walk the walk.**

**NOW HERE IS THE "KEY" TO what Jesus is saying when he speaks about OUR FAITH AND DUTY.** We have a duty to be faithful to Him in our daily life, not just speaking about Christ, but living with Him throughout our individual life each day.

**HOW "FAITH" IS APPLIED IN SERVICE TO OTHERS IS WHAT JESUS IS TALKING ABOUT.** A servant's task is never done, as Jesus explains. The servant comes in from a full day's work in the field not to eat right

away, but to serve the master's meal. If the servant thinks that he has a compliment coming for this work, he is mistaken. **He is doing what is expected of him.** If the disciples wanted to ask for an increase of anything, it should not have been faith, *but the energy to apply the faith in ongoing, never-ending service.*

**We're talking real-world faith.** Belief that will help one function in the marketplace, the home, the school, the job — and even when everything is falling apart.

**The faith is simply in Jesus, who he is and what he has done for us.** The confidence of our faith is not in how **GREAT** it is but that it is in **THE RIGHT ONE**. The One who promises us Salvation and Forgiveness of Sins. When we live in **GRACE**, we already have salvation, we cannot expect anything more. **So living in ones duty to God does not get us praise or commendation from God because we are only doing what is expected.**

Our duty is to live for Christ and to live in the world for others. In this season of Pentecost we are always talking about our living in Christ.

And that brings us **to another point Jesus makes in this text** as he speaks about the servant dutifully doing his job without looking, for reward or praise.

**JESUS SAYS THAT THE KINGDOM PEOPLE ARE EXPECTED TO SERVE OTHERS, TO WORSHIP GOD, TO FULFILL THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS HE GAVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.** *"You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your mind with all your strength and with all your soul and to love your neighbor as yourself."* That is expected. It has nothing whatsoever to do with your salvation -- **that is a God given gift.**

**This is yours and mine expected response. GOD ACTS—WE RESPOND!!!** This response is what that poem by Mr. Guest was all about. This response is possible by a strong and vibrant faith life. This response is what Luther called sanctification or our being made holy, or, growing spiritually. Life in Christ is not static, but alive and changing, growing and maturing. Salvation is assured, but how we live with that assurance of salvation is the challenging and growing part our Christian journey.

**Maybe the following will help us understand HOW FAITH IS TO BE LIVED.**

**It takes a lot of faith to stay at sea for a month,** fishing for one's livelihood under a carpet of water, not seeing where the catch is but going after it anyway! In her bestseller, *The Hungry Ocean*, Linda Greenlaw describes the character of the best crew mates: ***"The most valuable men aboard a fishing boat are those who can successfully wear the blinders, who can see the light at the end of the tunnel, no matter how dim, and who can be most imaginative when dealing with the obstacles that threaten to pull the shade."*** She recounts how a crew member pulled his own tooth with needle-nose pliers rather than having the boat travel 600 miles to the nearest dentist and lose their position in the fishing fields. Another fisherman filed off smooth his two front teeth after being hit in the mouth with a piece of gear and then continued fishing as if it had not happened. This is a rather salty way to talk about what Jesus means regarding a ***mustard seed faith*** and a dogged attitude about simply doing one's work.

**Justification**, salvation is God's work alone, but **sanctification**, living and growing in God's love is a joint effort between you and God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Remember the meaning to the third article of the creed you learned in confirmation, it says it is the spirit who calls, gather, enlightens the saints or believers of God. Paul says very clearly in Romans that the Holy Spirit works with our spirit so that we might cry Abba Father, Or Daddy God. And this process happens to kingdom people, people who have felt the saving act of God through Christ and are now living out their response to that great gift of salvation.

In Acts 4:13 it says ***"Now when they saw the boldness Peter and John, realizing they were normal, common, men, they were amazed, And suddenly, they recognized that they had been with Jesus."***

Or as Paul says in Ephesians 4:15, ***"Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ who is the head."***

We are called as kingdom people to set an example, not for reward, not for praise, but because it is our duty, it is our response to God's saving grace in our lives.

**And as we live in this response to God's grace, we have a peace that lets us act, lets us live out our faith.**

**Salvation is assured, but living is an ongoing process.**

**An example:**

A young man applied for a job as a farmhand. When the farmer asked for his qualifications, he said, "I can sleep when the wind blows." This puzzled the farmer. But he liked the young man and hired him. A few days later, the farmer and his wife were awakened in the night by a violent storm. They quickly began to check things out to see if all was secure. They found that the shutters of the farmhouse had been securely fastened. A good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace. The young man slept soundly. The farmer and his wife then inspected their property. They found that the farm tools had been placed in the storage shed, safe from the elements. The tractor had been moved into the garage. The barn was properly locked. Even the animals were calm. All was well.

The farmer then understood the meaning of the young man's words, "I can sleep when the wind blows." Because the farmhand did his work loyally and faithfully when the skies were clear, he was prepared for the storm when it broke. So when the wind blew, he was not afraid. He could sleep in peace.

### **SO, HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO OUR LIVES?**

The story about the young farmhand illustrates a principle that is often overlooked about being prepared for various events that occur in life. There was nothing dramatic or sensational in the young farmhand's preparations -- he just faithfully did what was needed each day. Therefore, he found peace even in a storm. A short poem expresses this principle as it pertains to your life.

*It isn't the things you do, It's the things you leave undone, which gives you a bit of heartache,*

**AT THE SETTING OF THE SUN, WHAT ARE YOU LEAVING UNDONE??**

*<sup>10</sup>So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!''"*

### **QUESTION... HAVE YOU DONE YOUR DUTY??**

**A closing story says it well: When Leonardo da Vinci was young and saw caged birds for sale on the streets of Florence, he would buy them and set them free. It was a rare trait in a boy and spoke of a noble heart full of genuine sympathy. So, as we go about the streets, we find many caged birds which we may set free, imprisoned joys that we may liberate—these “Caged Birds” are others we can HELP.**

Naturalists say that the stork, having most tenderly fed its young, will sail under them when they first attempt to fly, and, if they begin to fall, will bear them up and support them. Also, when one stork is wounded by the sportsman, the able ones gather about it, put their wings under it, and try to carry it away.

These instincts in the bird **teach us the lesson of HELPFULNESS.** We should come up close to those who are in any way overburdened or weak and put our own strength underneath them, help them along; and when another fellow-being is wounded or crushed, **whether by sorrow or by sin,** it is our duty to gather about them, and try to lift them up and save them.

**If we have “faith” to do this:** There is scarcely a limit to our possibilities of helpfulness in these ways.

Guest said at the beginning of this message: **"I'D RATHER 'SEE' A SERMON THAN HEAR ONE ANYDAY!!"**

Jesus says to us every day: *“So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"* **Remember: There is great power in your FAITH when you go beyond what is expected of YOU!!** Amen