

Sermon 2009 Pentecost 23  
Text: 1 Kings 17:8-16  
Theme: "Want Faith?"

Who doesn't want faith? Who wouldn't want to live life with no worries, with absolute certainty that God will take care of everything? I would love to get up in the morning and go through the day without once even thinking of the family finances because I was so certain that God had it all under control. I would love to sit through a Church Council meeting without once hearing that we might have to cut this or that budget because we don't have enough money in the offerings.

I am always fascinated with faith. When I go see some of our older members, especially the ones who have entered their 9<sup>th</sup> decade of life, they have a very different way of thinking than most of us do. Now I suppose we could just write it off to senility. Of course Grandma doesn't worry about paying the rent...she doesn't always even remember where she lives. But I think that it is far more than a memory lapse. These folks have faith that has grown to such a proportion that they are finally

beginning to believe that God really does work everything out for their good.

These people, in their 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> decades of life have fed their faith with Word and Sacrament and that faith has finally grown to proportions that overtake our human frailty. They quit being afraid of poor health and financial crisis and family disharmony and begin to realize that God works through it all for our good and His glory. They just quit being afraid.

We all would love to be where they are so the important question is how did they get there? Step one: Faith never grows if you don't use it. I can go to the gym, go and sit in the bar and stare at the exercise equipment for hours. Yes, by the way, my health club really does have a bar in it – where else would I belong? Anyway, I can sit in the comfy chair in that bar and I can stare right out at the elliptical trainers, the exercise bikes, the treadmills, the basketball court, the racquetball courts and the swimming pool. I could sit for hours drinking beer and staring at the equipment and my muscle mass will not increase

one bit. In order for my muscles to grow stronger, I have to use them.

Likewise, in order for our faith to grow stronger we have to use it. No doubt, it's more comfortable in the bar. That's why sometimes God sends us to faith camp (sort of like fat camp for sinners). The widow of Zarephath was not particularly looking for a faith development program. And yet, God sent Elijah to take her to faith camp. Not only did Elijah ask her to share her meager supplies but...listen to this now...he asked to be fed FIRST.

What does that say? Something that is seen is not done by faith is it? If the widow had made food for herself and her son and then seen that there was still plenty left for Elijah, where is the faith in that? But if she had to take the little that she had and give it to Elijah, then she had to use faith that there would be enough for her and her son, and in using that faith...that faith grew.

When we wait until we have all the money collected before we begin to do ministry, we are walking by sight not faith. When

we give after all the bills are paid, we are walking by sight not faith. When we diminish dreams and naysay goals because we cannot see how they can be realized, we are walking by SIGHT and NOT FAITH and THAT IS NOT WHAT WE ARE CALLED TO DO! And our faith will never grow as it could.

We are called to walk by FAITH, not sight. We are called to step out into open space and trust in God to hold us up. Do we have lofty dreams here? Absolutely! In one year I want the Trinity Center remodeled so that we have a better fellowship area and a place more welcoming to the community. In two years I want to see us running a full daycare, preschool, after school program and music school. I want us to run a coffee house out of Founders Hall and in a few more years, I want us to acquire all of the property on this block and build a senior citizen apartment building that physically connects to this church so that our seniors never have to leave the building to attend activities or worship. Lofty dreams? Absolutely, but why not? Does God call us to be safe and secure? NO! He calls us to step out in faith and believe with all our hearts and minds and souls that he will greatly bless

us as we follow him and do whatever we can to proclaim the Gospel!

Want faith? Want faith that can move mountains? Want faith that does not cling to fleeting things like checkbooks and budgets and doctor's reports? Then start using it! Be the widow of Zarephath who used the last of her flour to follow God. Be that poor woman who put in her last cent. Stop sitting on your barstool and watching the exercise equipment! Use your faith and be amazed at what God can do with so little. AMEN