

Just Good Enough for a Coin?

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Lamentations 3:22-33; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

It's on all our currency, a simple statement, **In God We Trust**. But the real question is, do we? And, are we ready to follow through with all that trust entails?

Now if I understand our history correctly it was out of a real sense of broken trust of unfair treatment, of unjust taxation and laws that led to our forefathers declaring our independence from the British Crown and Government. Such a step was not taken lightly and involved a great deal of trust in the creator of the universe, God, for the Declaration of Independence states in its concluding paragraph "We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown... It was a bold step to take, and we have been celebrating it since the end of the Spanish War in 1812 and we will celebrate it again this coming Tuesday.

In the gospel as we heard it read this morning we encounter two good people who seek freedom from the burdens of being. One a Jewish religious leader whose 12 year-old daughter is fatally ill and a woman who has been ill for 12 years, bleeding heavily and so is unclean and a social and religious outcast from her people.

And what of you and I, we too have special requests that we seek to have met. The healing of a broken relationship, a deep sense of sadness at the terrible cost of the war on terror, a deep longing for peace, a blessing for a neighbor or friend. Why even some simple and clear direction to follow in an increasingly complex and confusing world might be a request common to many of us.

The request of our forefathers became reality the colonies gained their independence but then came the burden of responsibility that freedom brought. Political leaders in our country could no longer look to others to share their burdens or help solve their problems. Our nation had to begin to deal with those problems and issues itself. Settling the land to the west, coping with civil war, ending slavery, and a myriad of other issues and actions. Right down to the present day where we find ourselves enmeshed in a seemingly intractable war, struggling to provide some semblance of order when a hurricane strikes, promising security from terrorists when such security is next to impossible to be had and seeing the erosion of civil liberties in the hope of gaining national safety. And worse, when people feel so unimportant, so alienated, so unheard that they fail to exercise the civil duty to vote. It is so tempting to blame the government one party or the other one or many politicians. When the burden of responsibility rests with us, the good people of this nation.

It was clear that if Jairus, or the woman with the hemorrhage were to have any help with their major catastrophes they were going to have to do something about it themselves. Jairus, a public figure, an outstanding religious leader in his community, a man of God none-the-less who turns to Jesus for help and assistance. What enormous courage! And the woman, made unclean by her medical condition and outcast, alienated, with no rights or privileges. She gathers up her courage and knows that she only needs to touch Jesus' garment and she will be made well. Both she and Jairus have to cross social boundaries in a way that was outrageous, scandalous, completely unacceptable to any of the right-minded people around them. And Jesus Himself, without once hesitating, returns their request without hesitation. Because what is at stake, what is always at stake is not correct conduct, nor is it doing what is right as opposed to what is wrong, but acting in and out of faith, trust in God.

That's a tall order, following God's ways rather than our own. Living as imitators of Christ rather than the people, who know what is right. Jesus meets the requests of Jairus and the woman. Jairus' daughter lives and the woman stops bleeding and is restored in both religious and social terms. Such is the amazing grace of God and the nature of His unconditional love so clearly demonstrated in what Christ does for these people. There is only one comment Jesus has to make; it is as relevant to us in this day and age as it was to Jairus. "Do not fear, only believe." Fear you see paralyzes people and perverts their actions whereas belief in God through Christ opens the way to light and life. How much different things might be in our life if we only took Jesus' remark to heart. How much different the action we might take.

As it is we embrace the most enormous gift of grace our forgiveness and the offer of our salvation given in and through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. If we could begin to carry that grace, that light into the world, the darkness that seems so overwhelming in our country these days may well begin to recede and usher in a return to the great ideals of an earlier time in this wonderful nation. Like those enshrined in a wonderful sonnet by Emma Lazarus called The New Colossus. I won't read the whole sonnet, just the closing lines with which I am sure you are familiar. Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me; I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" Just so Christ stands at the door to a new life, to a new beginning, to a new way of being. Amen.