

Grace and peace are your dear friends from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

A different kind of message today; no sermon per se, but rather a conversation about the choice God leaves with us and the power we have to choose. Our gospel text is about faith and our choice to leverage it, to use it, to activate it for the sake of our selves and the sake of our life-together.

First, let's begin with defining again what faith is: Faith is a gift from God that provides us with the strength and understanding to believe in that which we cannot see, touch, feel, quantify, rationalize, or prove. In the simplest terms, faith is the gift from God that enables us to believe in God. Once we accept the gift of faith, the gift will grow and provide the means to sustain us throughout our life.

Listen very carefully at the words of the gospel text: ⁴Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." ⁵***And he could do no deed of power there.***"

Now the message in the context of the passage in the time and place of Nazareth is similar to today in that we expect miracles, blessings, people of great honor to come from places of great renown and not the humble little farming communities in the middle of nowhere. Our expectation and assumptions can literally blind us to the truth and disable any possible faith we may have. The people of Nazareth had no faith and Jesus could do no deed of power.

Now the larger context of this rather obscure passage my friends in the impact this has on our lives today. Jesus is sharing a very important message as it relates to our relationship with God through Him. To understand what Jesus is saying is the difference between allowing God the freedom to work through us or limiting what God can do with us. You see, it is just that easy, simple, and clear; the choice is ours whether we will allow miracles, the blessings, and the gifts to happen in our lives or not.

Faith is the gift to believe and we know from the witness of Holy Scripture that all things are possible with God. Jesus points out the limitations we have and explains many things for us are impossible. And still, we cannot allow our limitations to limit God; we must allow our faith to serve us by granting God the freedom to perform the miracles in the world through everyday people like you and me.

Let's try this again; we have faith – each to a portion to serve us in our needs. For that matter, God declares that His grace for us is sufficient for the day. We have the promises of God's love and the history of God's faithfulness to His people. And still, we wake up each day and simply say what can and cannot be, happen, or come.

How many times have we uttered words similar to; there will never be world peace; things will never change; things can get any better; there is no hope for tomorrow; there is no way I will ever make a difference...and the list goes on.

These are the very words and statements that counter affect our faith because we are declaring what we believe and limiting what God can do in our life. This is the defeat, the decay, and the depression that leads to death ...death of the human body and the human spirit. This is the downward spiral that pulls others into the same darkness where faith is not allowed to shine. If we believe that God will not act and we prevent the actions of our faith then there is little hope remaining in our future.

However my friends, when did God ever ask us to do what was difficult? When did God ever place us in a no-win situation? God's grace is sufficient for today, so is our faith, and so is the strength we have been provided and ALL WE NEED TO DO IS ACCEPT THIS! All we need to do is use the faith we have been given to believe that God is in control, we are in the best of care, and together we are all moving in the right direction towards the day of peace!

It always has been about believing; that is what our faith is granted for so God has the freedom within our hearts, minds, and bodies to make the differences in the world so the light of Christ can shine brightly through you and me.

God is asking us to participate through the faith we have been given, not so we will be set apart, but so together we can solve the problems that for us alone are impossible. When we start waking up and say to our self, our friends and neighbors; this is going to be a better day; God is making a difference in the world, there is hope for our world...then we open ourselves to see, witness, and declare the miracles of God in the world around us today.

God did not stop performing miracles when Christ left the earth; the miracles were presented so we would believe. Now that we do believe, there is a host of other people that need to believe and God working through us can be the visible miracle in other people's life so they can come to believe that their faith is also allowing God to make a difference in the world through their lives.

When people no longer believe, when their faith in God is dimmed by the decay of this world and their hope has diminished to what exists in the present; then there is little room for God to be the miracle they seek in their life simply because they can no longer accept it. Faith requires believing, a continued trust, and a renewed hope to reveal the power of God's miracles working in the world today through the common but treasured people of God.

People of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, it really is up to you and me and the countless people with us in life-together. Jesus made promises to us that are God's very word of truth to us; where two or more are gathered together, "I am there"; "Ask and it shall be given, knock and the door shall be opened, seek and you shall find." You see, faith is what unlocks the power and efficacy of these promises my friends because for the person without faith, for the person with no hope, for the person with no belief; these words cannot produce the deeds of power that God promises.

With faith, hope, and trust, God will bring the future towards us and will open the doors for our eyes to see what lies ahead. My dear friends, the future is bright, and beautiful in a kingdom of majesty and glory that we cannot comprehend. The world we live in is full of promise and God continues to remain with us. The grace we have been given and the faith that is our is sufficient to see and believe that God is working in the world even where many can only see doubt.

With faith, we can see miracles where others wander in darkness; with faith God can do anything that otherwise is impossible; with faith God will open doors that others do not even know exist.

So what will you do with your faith? What will you allow your self to believe in and what will you believe God can do (and is doing)? My friends, this is up to you and the choice is yours. Choose faith and believe and accept the peace that passes all understanding is forever keeping your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.