

The elderly pastor was searching his closet for his collar before church one Sunday morning. In the back of the closet, he found a small box containing 3 eggs and 100 \$1 bills. He called his wife into the closet to ask her about the box and its contents. Embarrassed, she admitted having hidden the box for their entire 25 years of marriage. Disappointed and hurt, the pastor asked her, "WHY?"

The wife replied that she hadn't wanted to hurt his feelings. He asked her how the box could have hurt his feelings. She said that every time during their marriage that he delivered a poor sermon, she had placed an egg in the box. The pastor felt that 3 poor sermons in 25 years was certainly nothing to feel bad about, so he asked her what the \$100 was for. She replied, "Each time I got a dozen eggs, I sold them to the neighbors for \$1."¹

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

Our scripture readings today begin with the creation narrative where God forms woman from the rib of the man. God creates woman as man's helper and partner in life with the words that the two shall become one flesh. From the beginning words of Holy Scripture, UNITY is a theme, a design, and a desire that God has for the people that He has created in His very own image.

Unity is a holy theme and a divine state of existence, but as human beings, we are far from perfect. We fall short in so many ways, yet the grace of God through the salvation of Jesus Christ ensures our very holiness before God. We are given the assurance of forgiveness and with it come the full knowledge that God remembers 'no more' what sins our past may hold. The past and the future are beyond our reach. Today however is ours to participate in through relationships with one another; to experience the unity we have with God, community, family, neighbors, and friends we are still waiting to meet.

The complexity of living a life that is both human and divine, saint and sinner is an image we embrace as Lutherans. Martin Luther stood firm on the understanding that we were indeed both 'simultaneously' righteous and sinful before God which is remembered in the words, "Simul Justus et Peccator".

If the dichotomy of living as a saint and sinner, human and divine is not difficult enough, the contrast of living as both a child and as an adult at the same time is another image that Jesus is calling us to understand as well for the sake of the Kingdom of God. A child like faith that we only possess when we are young is the very faith we need to rely upon to receive the Kingdom of God.

Jesus tells us, "whoever does not received the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." A child like faith that trusts, embraces, and accepts the gift without question or doubt is what God is telling us about our faith. Faith is most effective when it is not questioned, but rather when it is accepted as the means to provide and sustain us in human form to carry out the divine tasks that lie before us. Faith is the gift from God that allows us to believe and grow in grace within the Kingdom of God.

As simple, clear, and undisputed as this is, the human element will continue to manifest because we are after all: human. We continue to have pain, feelings, wants, concern, hunger and a host of human stimuli that remind us we are human. We bruise when we run into things; we bleed when we come into

¹ http://www.sarasotawedding.com/jokes/marriage_jokes.html

contact with a rose bush, we cry when we lose a loved one.... And we experience this from the youngest point in our life age to the oldest age we become.

Our humanity stays with us, but what happens to the child-like faith we have? To add to our difficulty with this Paul tells the Corinthians, “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.”² As life continues from childhood, our memory teaches us behaviors that ensure our human survival. Our wisdom grows, our knowledge increases, and our experiences prevent us from falling backwards and enable our forward progress as individuals and societies.

The memories that help protect and save our human life also lead to us questioning our divine life. The child-like faith we once marveled at, with wonder and astonishment, we can grow to question, doubt, and see differently because of what *life* has taught us. We learn that *we* must be responsible, *we* must act accordingly, and *we* must take measures to ensure our survival. This is what human life expects; this is what human life requires.

My dear friends in Christ, your faith is sufficient and is the fully, wholly, and completely divine gift that can be relied upon today with the same confidence and trust as the day when you first came to know and experience it. Faith is a gift for a lifetime that keeps us united in body and spirit with our heavenly Father. Faith is the gift that allows us to accept and understanding that we are both saint and sinner, we live in a human and divine kingdom; we are both children and adults before our Almighty God and Father, who accepts us as we are.

Faith is sufficient and faith is essential for our relationship, understanding, and unity in both kingdoms. Our faith reveals our place in the Kingdom of God and reflects our previous residence in the Kingdom of this world. Faith reflects our previous actions serving this world; then putting away our childish ways to grow in grace and faithfully serve God in His kingdom.

Our faith first given to us as children of God, regardless of our age, serves us well and shapes our understanding of unity with all our brothers and sisters in Christ across every culture, race, age, and time. It is this child-like faith that keeps us free of doubt, question, or concern; because our unity in the Kingdom of God will not come to an end.

Separation is not an option for what God has joined together. God has joined Himself to humanity – His One Holy Church whom He has adorned as a bride prepared for a bridegroom. The Holy Church in the Kingdom of God has been pre-ordained by God since before the foundations of the world were set in place. We have the promise of our unity with our Lord in a place – here and now – where the peace that passes all understanding will keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

² 1 Cor. 13:11