

First Trinity Lutheran Church
John 6:24-25
Ephesians 1:1-16
Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15
August 6, 2006

Surrender to God or Rely on Yourself: What will you do?

For a few moments I would like you to be a traveler on a journey. This journey takes you to a far away desert on a hot day and you have been walking now for a long time. I think given the heat of this past week this story for some of us might have been reality. As you walk alone in this desert you come to a water pump in the sand. For some time your water canteen has been empty and you are desperate for water. Tied to the water pump is a hand written sign put there by the previous desert hiker. The sign reads "I have buried a bottle of water to prime the pump. don't drink any of it." "Pour in half of it into the pump to wet the leather. Wait three minutes, and then pour the rest of it into the shaft of the pump. Then pump. The well has never gone dry, but the pump must be primed to bring the water up. Have faith, believe. When you are through drawing water from the pump, fill the bottle and bury it in the sand for the next traveler.

Having come upon this pump in the desert with this sign and being out of water, what would you do? Will you dig the water bottle out of the sand and drink from it, or will you believe and dare to pour every drop of water into pump? What will you do?

This story contains an interesting question for all of us. Do we believe and trust in that written message by the water pump, or do we only worry about our own thirst and drink from the water bottle thinking that the water will give us enough strength to go on? What would you do?

Now in the same way think about the words in the Bible. They are our words of salvation in the desert of life. They are our source of life, life for eternity. Do you believe in them, or will you try your own way?

We also can think about Jesus in the same way as the note in the desert. Jesus says he is our salvation in the desert of life, our source of life, life for eternity. Do you believe

what Jesus says is true for Your life, or do you go your own way? Our Gospel reading this morning concerns faith. Someone in the crowd asked Jesus, "What must we do to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God that you believe in him who he has sent." Then Jesus goes on and says, "I am the bread of life; he who come to me shall not hunger, he who believes in me shall never thirst."

Faith can be defined as an obedient attitude to the will of God. And Jesus says faith is the work that a follower of his should be about. Trusting and believing that the promises God made for us through Jesus Christ are true.

But often in the journey of life we get mixed up. We think that our job is to work for our salvation and so we try our hardest to save ourselves instead of **trusting in God and being obedient to his will**. It is as if we drank that bottle of water beside the pump instead of using it to prime the pump. If we drink from that bottle we would trust in our own self's, our own resources for living, instead of trusting and believing in God and his promises.

Jesus tells us in this passage that **salvation is a gift** that is Bread of Life. In verse 27 Jesus says: "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal."

Notice especially these words, which the Son of man will give to you, give, as the dictionary defines that word, a gift is a present. So the food that Jesus gives us is a present. It is a gift something that is handed over to us with no strings attached. Something that God through his Son wants us to have, salvation. Notice Jesus doesn't say anything about us working for this gift, or earning this gift, or achieving this gift for ourselves, but Jesus says he will give it to us.

Sometimes we want to try to earn that gift of salvation. But I ask you, when can you and I do enough for God? I would dare say that none of us would ever be ready enough for God. None of us would be pure enough for God through our own efforts. But

through Christ, God makes us ready for him.

Listen again to the words of Jesus: " But through Christ," God makes us ready for him. God is doing the work, God is doing the action, God is giving us salvation through the body and blood of Christ. It is God's gift to the children that he loves. Our work as Jesus says is to believe in him who he has sent. Our work is to have faith in Jesus Christ who will give us salvation.

We don't need to worry about our salvation, we don't need to try and obtain it for ourselves. Our work is to believe that this promise of salvation is true for us. It is God who is steering the ship of life, it is God who is in control of our salvation, and it is God who will welcome us home to him when our time on this earth is ended. Jesus wants us to believe and know that our salvation is secure in the hands of God.

Some time ago there was a ship returning from an overseas voyage entering the St. Lawrence River. A heavy fog enveloped the ship on all sides, completely concealing the shores and all objects from the view of the passengers. Much to their amazement, the ship continued at full speed. They became frightened considering such speed as extremely reckless on the part of the captain. Finally, one of the passengers expressed concerns to the first mate, demanding that the ship be slowed down. The first mate listened, then replied with a smile: "O don't be afraid, the passengers need not be uneasy in the least. The fog extends up only a short way above the water, and the captain is at the masthead, and is up above the fog and it is he who is directing the vessel."

In the same kind of way, Jesus is asking us to believe and trust in God as the captain of our ship directing us above all the foggy situations of life that we cannot understand. God is directing our ship of life because as captain God loves us and wants us to have a life that is abundant with all of his blessings. Faith receives the gifts that God offers us. Faith believes in the promises of God, faith accepts God's work of salvation as a gift.

And God wants all people to be saved. As it says in John. 3:16, "For God so loved the

world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." God wants us all to accept this gift of salvation. God has worked hard at convincing us of his good intentions for us. He showed us those good intentions in the form of his son. He let the world kill his son so that he could show us his great love, by raising him up on the third day. God is a God of love and he wants us to trust in that love, to believe in that love, to live with that love while we walk our journey on this earth.

Far away in a lonely desert stands a water pump in the sand. You are a solitary traveler, and your canteen is empty and you come upon that pump. Tied to it is a hand written sign put there by some pilgrim. The sign reads, "I have buried a bottle of water to prime the pump. Don't drink any of it."

"Pour in half of it to wet the leather. Wait, and then pour in the rest. Then pump. The well has never gone dry, but the pump must be primed to bring the water up. Have faith, believe. When you are through drawing water, fill the bottle and bury it in the sand for the next traveler."

You are a traveler upon the planet earth. You come across a book, a book with 66 other books in it, as you read it you see that it can give you the assurance, the strength and the conviction to live life to the fullest. But it asks you to surrender yourself to someone else, to trust in the gifts this person is willing to give to you. What will you do? Surrender, or rely on yourself? What will you do?

Amen