21st Sunday after Trinity
Rolling Meadows, 1965

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. John 4: 48-50 Jesus therefore said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went his way,

THE MARKS OF FAITH!

When faith begins in the soul, it is but as a grain of mustard seed. God's people are not born giants. They are babes at first; and the first flicker of faith in their heart needs to be fanned and kept alive until it becomes a brilliant and consuming fire. The first mark of faith is that it seeks. Look at the nobleman in our text! He had heard about the celebrated preacher and prophet who had been going through the cities of Galilee and Judea performing miracles of healing and helping. He stored these things in his heart, little thinking that they would ever be of any practical service to him. Then it happened that his son fell sick - perhaps his only child, one very dear to his father's heart. The sickness became worse. The father consulted every physician, but the case was hopeless. The child was at the point of death. Then the father remembered the stories he had heard about Jesus. The spark of faith was ignited. He hurriedly traveled the 20 miles from Capernaum to Cana. No sooner did he get within earshot of Jesus, when he began to cry: Lord, come down before my child dies.

Now notice that this seeking faith excited his activity. As soon as God gives a man such seeking faith, he is no longer idle about religion - he does not fold his arms with the wicked and cry: If I am to be saved, I shall be saved, and I will sit still and do nothing, for if I am to be damned, I shall be damned. He is not careless and indifferent, as he used to be, as to whether he should go up to the House of God or not. His seeking faith makes him attend the means of grace, leads him to search the Word, leads him to the diligent use of every ordained means of blessing for his soul. There is a sermon to be heard, no matter if he has 5 miles or 20 miles to walk. He is concerned not only that he may be sometimes in the Hous of God, but often there, and he becomes among the most enthusiastic of hearers.

More than this, seeking faith gives a man great power in prayer. How earnest was this nobleman: Lord, come down before my child dies. When seeking faith enters a man's soul, it makes him pray. He is [illegible]

over a few words when he rises in the morning, and then, half asleep, ringing the same chimes again at night when he goes to sleep. Satan may throw a thousand difficulties in the way, but seeking faith will compel a man to knock at mercy's door. He does not yet have peace, but he does not give up. He is persistent. The nobleman asked once, and the only answer he received was an apparent rebuke. But he did not turn away offended. Rather, he cried out all the more: Sir, come down before my child dies. I cannot tell you how he said it, but I have no doubt it came from the depths of his soul, with tears starting from his eyes. He seemed to say, I cannot let You go except You come and save my child. Is there anything I can say to convince You? Let a father's affection be my best argument; and if my lips are not eloquent, let the tears of my eyes take the place of the words of my tongue. Come down before my child dies.... It is no wonder you do not have any peace, if you have been bringing before God your cold prayers. Heat them red-hot in the furnace of desire. If you merely say in the chill form of dead orthodoxy, God be merciful to me a sinner, you will never find mercy. It is the man who cries out in the burning anguish of heart and soul, God be merciful to me a sinner - Lord save me or I perish - that man wins his way through to the gates of heaven. Give up prayer, and you seal your own damnation; renounce supplication, and you renounce Christ and heaven. Continue in prayer, and though the blessing be delayed, it must come; in God's own time it must appear to you! He that is never on he knees on earth shall never stand upon his feet in heaven; he that never wrestles with the angel here below shall never be admitted into heaven by that angel above.. If your faith does not make you pray, get rid of it, and God help you to begin again!

Seeking faith can do much, but it makes many mistakes. The fault of seeking faith is that it knows too little. Notice that the nobleman prayed, Sir, come down! He thought Jesus could not save his son unless He came and looked at him, put His hand upon him, and perhaps knelt down beside him. But the Lord could work the miracle without coming down. This is the lesson we all must learn. So often we want to dictate to God how He shall save us. We want Him to send us some special signs and wonders, some special dream or vision, some special conviction -

and then we think we could believe. If you have no better reason to believe that you are in Christ than a special dream or vision, it is time you began again. If you have seen signs and wonders, ~~but~~ be thankful for them. If they have not come, trust simply in His Word which says, Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven! Trust in the Lord; wait patiently for Him, cast all your confidence upon Christ, and you shall be saved - with or without and of these signs and wonders.

This is the lesson the nobleman had to learn. And it brought him to the second stage of faith. Jesus said to him, Go, your son will live. It was about the 7th hour - one o'clock in the afternoon - time enough for him to have hurried back to Capernaum. Yet the text says he did not meet his servants until the next day, because they say: Yesterday, at the seventh hour the fever left him. In other words, he did not go home immediately, as though he must be in time to get another doctor, if Jesus had no succeeded. He went his way leisurely and calmly, confident in the truth of what Jesus had told him. I can imagine him having a conversation with a stranger in Cana that night: Sir, asks the stranger, why are you so happy? Why, because my child is cured! - But you have not seen him cured! - No, but my Lord said he was, and I believe Him! - But you have no evidence! - No, I do not want any; He said it, and I know it is true; He told me to go my way, my son would live; I go my way, and I am quite at peace and at ease. So it is that when your faith reaches the second stage in which you are able to take Christ at His Word, you will begin to know the happiness of believing. Then it is your faith will save your soul. Take Christ at His Word: He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. But, you say, I feel no evidence! Believe it none the less! - But I feel no joy in my heart! Believe it, and the joy will come! Heroic faith trusts Christ in the teeth of a thousand contradictions. It says with Job: Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!

Jesus said to the nobleman, Go! and he went without a word. Does your faith make you obedient? There are many honest and upright worldly men whose conduct ~~that~~ puts Christians to shame. If you are not ready to obey - if you are inclined to hedge and cheat a little in your dealings, let this be said: You are no Christian if you

can act in business beneath the dignity of an honest man. If God has not made you honest, He has not saved your soul - the love of God is not in you. I do not plead for perfection, but I do plead for honesty - and if your religion has not made you careful and prayerful in your common life, if you are not in fact made a new creature in Christ, your faith is empty - as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Now to the third and best stage of faith! The nobleman arrived home and saw his son perfectly restored to health. And we read: He himself believed, and all his household. If you say, I have faith, I will ask you: Has your faith led you to bless your household? Rowland Hill once said, When a man becomes a Christian, his dog and his cat ought to be the better for it. He ought to be a better husband, a better father than he was before, or else his religion is not genuine. If you say, I keep my religion to myself, I must say to you: You do not have to be anxious about its ever being stolen. A man who keeps his godliness to himself does not have to put it under lock and key - there is not enough to tempt the devil himself to come and take it from you.

Too many fathers do not seem as if they are interested in their children' salvation. They would like to see their boy turn out well and their girl married comfortably, but as to their life in Christ - it does not trouble their heads. They never make it a matter of anxiety of soul as to whether their children shall be saved or not. Out with that kind of religion! It is not the religion of God. He who does not care for his own household is worse than a heathen man and a publican.

You must never be content until all your children are saved. Lay the promise before God. The promise is unto you and to your children. The Greek word does not just refer to infants, but to children, grandchildren, and any descendants you may have - grown-up or not. Do not cease to plead until they have all come to a living faith in Christ. But, you say, you don't know how unruly my children are; they break my heart. Then pray God to break their hearts, and they will not break yours anymore. But they will bring me with sorrow to the grave.

Pray God, then, that He may bring their eyes with sorrow to prayer and to the Cross and then they will not bring you to the grave. But, you say, my children have such hard hearts. Look at your own! You think they cannot be saved: look at yourselves. He that saved you can save them. Go to Him in prayer, and say, Lord, I will not let You go except You bless me. And if your child is at the point of death - at the point of damnation on account of sin - then plead like the nobleman: Lord, come down before my child dies and save him for Thy mercy's sake! Lord, You have said to promise is unto us and to our children! You canny deny Your own covenant. We challenge Your Word by holy faith: Do as Thou hast said!

Amen.