

Psalm 23, Hebrews 10:19-25

“Lettuce”

This past week has reinforced for me the undeniable presence of God in the world, in my life, and in the life of my family. It has been a powerful, powerful week for me personally and so I wanted to share with you the power of God that I experienced this week and that I think is reflected in both of our Scriptures this morning. The wedding, well, it went off perfectly. I kept it together for the most part, I know that is what most of you want to know, were you a blubbing fool, no, I wasn't. The most emotional time was when I saw her for the first time in her dress getting ready to head out to walk down the aisle. It took my breath away and it was a bit of an out of body experience for me. What flashed back to me was a little girl who had a speech impediment and couldn't be understood until middle school when she spoke and how faithful God had been to her and now she is a public defender ensuring that justice is done for the least of these, and she is the happiest I have ever seen her in my life. God's presence at that moment was undeniable for me personally.

The ceremony, well, it was perfect, so many things can go wrong in a DIY wedding, and not a single one did, again, the providence of God was felt and God manifested Himself clearly and repeated in the service and in the celebration and now, I continue to pray, in their life together as husband and wife.

On Friday evening we ordained Walter Kondratowski as a minister of the Word and Sacrament into the Presbytery of Donegal. The journey he has been on, the starting and the stopping, the change of course and the change of direction, with the Lord constantly bringing him back to this goal has been accomplished. The celebration at Our Table was palpable, where in this small room you see a few dozen folks so gloriously happy for how the Lord has provided a shepherd for the flock. God revealed himself powerfully in that service on Friday evening.

And now today, we find ourselves with a whole bunch of shirts in front of us chomping at the bit to get on a bus at 3 today that will take us to BWI and then on to Naples, Italy to begin a mission trip that all of you have had a hand in allowing to happen, but which ultimately God has smiled upon and in God's providence has seen it through from the beginning to the end. But we are not at the end of it yet. I can't help but think of Don Welk and all the work that he put into it this year and how he would be smiling today feeling a sense of accomplishment, even though he is fully accomplished right here and now.

We face this trip with a confidence that does not come from our experience or our skills or anything that we do, but rather the source of our certainty and stability is simply the utter reliability of God. We leave for Italy with a confidence and certainty that is not built upon any of us or any of our abilities but from our history of God's reliability. God is good, all the time, all the time, God is good. Lettuce read.

READ

Is there any other Scripture that speaks to the reliability, the stability, the constancy, the steadfast love, and the presence of God in our lives more powerfully than Psalm 23? This psalm provides a promise and an assurance that we have witnessed over time, that is why we know it, that is why so many of us have memorized it because every time we hear it, every time we say it, we are reminded of God's faithfulness in our lives and how that will never, never disappear. And that makes our faith in God, that makes our trust in God stronger, every single time.

The psalmist provides a promise and an assurance that we have witnessed and experienced in our lives and that we need to be reminded of time after time. We need to be reminded that our cups runneth over, we have been blessed in ways that we take for granted, but that should never happen. When we have walked in the Valley of the Shadow of death we have not been alone and we have experienced the very real presence of God during that time. This Psalm gives us the proof and the opportunity to remember that God is present and active in our own lives

The Hebrews Scripture takes this assurance, takes this confidence that we have in our lives not because of Psalm 23 but because of how we have experienced God faithfully, and gives us ways in which to live our lives to celebrate that stability and that peace that we have as a result of the presence of Jesus in our lives. If you look at vs.19 it begins with the words: therefore, since we have confidence. The author assumes that we understand that we have a confidence that comes from the faithfulness of God. That is what we have set up until now, with me reminding us of what we have experienced just this past week that pointed directly to the faithfulness of God. Psalm 23 has been a constant in our lives that has pointed to the faithfulness of God. The author assumes that we are able to sit here in this church and say without a shadow of a doubt that God has been faithful.

Are you able to say that? Can you recount the ways in which you have experienced God and today be thankful for that? We should, we need to, it ought to create joy, and stability, and

confidence, and peace in our lives. So the author begins with since we have confidence as a result of God's faithfulness, because we trust in God there are three things we are called to do and the author begins explaining each one of those things using the word lettuce. That's right, lettuce.

The first we find in vs.22, lettuce have faith. Faith is a gift from God that we have to identify in our own lives and pin point the ways in which our lives are impacted by the faith that we have in God. It is not enough to believe in God, anyone of us can do that. We have to believe God and God's promises and when we do believe God when he says I will not leave you or forsake you then we have the faith of a mustard seed. We see also in this verse that baptism is the sign and the symbol of the faith that we carry as a gift given to us directly from God. So the first thing we must do, is lettuce have faith.

How is your faith in God? Sometimes life can become so daunting that our faith is shaken, that is when we need to be reminded of God's faithfulness. Sometimes life is so clearly the result of God's providence and blessing, as I mentioned this whole last week, that we have to stop and give thanks and recognize that our faith has increased as a result. I know from my living life with you that faith is not the easiest to pin down. We have talked many times about how we wish could would speak to us in ways that are clear and able to be understood, but we don't always get that. But let's be clear, our faith can only come as a result of our assurance of God's faithfulness. That's why it is a gift.

The second that we find is in vs.23 lettuce have hope. Last week Michael led us on a journey through how do we handle our past and the memories that, and how we do that has a lot to do with the type of hope, and honestly the amount of hope that we have in our lives. How do you view your future? That question more than any other will tell a story on the hope that you currently have in your life. Upon what basis are we to have the type of hope that Scripture says we should have in order to live our lives in a way that reflects the kingdom of God?

Well, again, our hope should not be built upon anything less than what, Jesus' blood and righteousness. So often we build our hope upon what we have accomplished, where we see our life heading, the current and immediate events that are taking place in our life and in the world. That is where we often pin our hopes, on that which we do and that which we are doing in our lives and in our world. Let's remind ourselves of that hymn, Our hope is built on nothing less,

than Jesus' blood and righteousness. On Christ, the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

We have Scripture that provides us with promises upon which we can build our hope. Someone read Jeremiah 29:11, or better yet, if someone knows it by heart say it out loud. Our hope is build upon the promises of God that says that he has our future in mind for us.

The final one is in verses 24-25 Lettuce have love. We have said over and over again that the greatest commandments we are given by Jesus is to love God and to love our neighbor. As a result we should be looking for opportunities to love God and to love our neighbor, not just receive that truth and settle back into it, but get out there and just start loving. That is why we send people out into the world, it is a reflection of our faith and our hope that leads to active love. That is why we have a food bank because it is a reflection of our faith and our hope that leads to love. How are you manifesting the love of Christ in your life?

Faith, hope, love. Paul had something to say about that, didn't he. I Corinthians 13, faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love. Friends, brothers and sisters, the response of the community of faith to God and to each other ought to declare to the world the peaceful relationship the covenant community enjoys as a result of the sacrifice of Christ. Lettuce have faith, Lettuce have hope, Lettuce has love. Amen.