

*(Sitting in a rocking chair, singing slowly, disconnected, The Faith We Sing, #2165)*

"It is the cry of my heart to follow you. It is the cry of my heart to be close to you. It is the cry of my heart to follow all of the days of my life.

"Teach me your holy ways, O Lord, so I can walk in your truth. Teach me your holy ways, O Lord, and make me wholly devoted to you. . ."

How do you sing the song of faith that is within you? How is your living allowing your faith to shine through?

Is it like I just sang? Slow, disjointed, uninterested?

As I look out at those who have professed faith in Christ, there are some concerns that I have. One of the threats to our Christian faith is a kind of slow, disconnected, disjointed way of living.

It is the kind of living out of faith that says this really isn't important to me. I don't want to work on growing closer to God, because I don't see the benefit of it. I don't see what I can get out of it.

So, for many, being a Christian means coming to church, on occasion or when it is convenient. *This type of view, misses the power, the life changing, life giving power of following Jesus Christ.*

Unfortunately, and we haven't liked to say this too often or too loud in church, this is the way too much of Christianity as it gets worked out in mainline churches like ours has been in recent decades. It is one of the reasons that has led to the decline among mainline denominations.

The world we live in is in the midst of major changes right now. The decline that churches have been facing really highlights the changes that our world is facing. Even though our congregation has experienced

some good growth over the past four and half years, we are not immune from the changes taking place in the world around us. And maybe that is why it is important to take a look at how we are singing the song of faith that is within us. Are we doing it in a slow, disjointed, uninterested way?

But we are not the first to face times of change. In our scripture for today, there are a couple of ways highlighted for how people face change.

Judaism was changing during the first century. There were people like the religious leaders, who had figured out how to work the system to their advantage. They didn't like change. It upset their world. It upset their order.

When Peter and John preached and crowds were converted, when Peter and John touched someone who had been sick and was healed they got defensive. They got angry. They were out to protect what they had earned.

Here is how they may have sung. . . *(singing angry & strident)* "It is the cry of my heart to follow you. It is the cry of my heart to be close to you. It is the cry of my heart to follow all of the days of my life.

"Teach me your holy ways, O Lord, so I can walk in your truth. Teach me your holy ways, O Lord, and make me wholly devoted to you. . ."

We have people right now, in our churches and in our world, singing in such an angry, strident way. Is that how you are singing?

How are you letting the fear and uncertainty of the world around us affect your relationship to God? To the church? To the world around you? Do you find yourself looking at people of color, or of different religious traditions with suspicion? Anger? Fear?

Do you see the people who are hurting and out of work as victims of their own doing? I would hope not.

But in a world that is changing, where many losses are happening for us and to us, it is tempting, as long as things are going well for us personally to act out of anger as a way of self preservation. There are movements within Christianity that are living with an extreme amount of anger and cynicism.

This anger and cynicism seeks to quickly put down others who are not like us or who do not believe like us. I believe that this type of extremism, exhibited by some within the Christian faith, is just as much of a danger to living the faith as the first type of disinterested faith that has plagued the church. But there is another way we can choose to live.

*(Sing with hope and vigor)* "It is the cry of my heart to follow you. It is the cry of my heart to be close to you. It is the cry of my heart to follow all of the days of my life.

"Teach me your holy ways, O Lord, so I can walk in your truth. Teach me your holy ways, O Lord, and make me wholly devoted to you. . ."

Peter and John lived their faith diligently. Faith for them was about a relationship with God through Christ. One they were working on each day. They sought to know God, to walk with God, to let God live through them to touch the hurting people of this world.

They woke each day expecting to see God at work in their lives. They were about building a relationship with God not building a religion.

What I am convinced of, is that if we are going to experience the life and hope that God wants to give us. It begins with us waking each day and living our faith diligently. It is about letting the song of faith within us come through us as we see injustices in the world and do our

best to work at them to make a difference for people, even if it is one person at a time.

Peter and John show us the way to live faith. It is by waking each day, doing our best to witness to this relationship with God that is making a difference for us. It is by working each day to develop a relationship with God that helps us get out of bed. And it is by taking that very relationship out into the world, to see the people who are hurting and touching them. By bringing hope and the love of God to them.

It is about seeing needs in this world, and allowing God to work through us to do what we can to bring about justice, and hope and grace.

Yes, our world is changing. But how we face that change, tells us a lot about us and about our faith. We can remain indifferent to it. Although that is getting harder. We can become militant and fight with all our might against that change. Or I believe that we can, each one of us, commit to working on our faith with diligence, with vigor. Understanding that we are working on our very relationship with God.

So what about you, how are you going to sing your song of faith?

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