

Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 83: Faith, Hope, and Love

Day 574: Confusion

Ok, I'm confused. What do you mean I need to desire and accept? I want a relationship with Christ, but what do I believe? Society has so many conflicting claims, and I do not know what "truth" is "my truth."

You bring up a very good point – what do we believe when we do not fully understand? Faith is understanding when you do not fully understand.

I don't understand – you're not making sense.

As we grow in Christianity, one of the barriers we need to cross is the sense that we have lost our bearings – what we thought we understood we frankly don't, what we thought we knew is confusing, and what we thought we wanted turns out to be emptiness.

Yes. I'm in that spot, and I frankly don't like it.

It is very uncomfortable. However, as Christ warns us, we need to change. We need to be re-created from certainty to faith, from sure knowledge to hope, and from desiring worldly emptiness to pursuing true eternal wealth.

You're not getting any less confusing, you realize that don't you?

I apologize! What you're going through is a key and needed component of discipleship. The first disciples were frequently baffled and stretched, as they searched for and found a more steady and sure rock in Christ than what they had known in the world. We'll spend some time exploring that this week. You and Christ need to mix together – and that means changing how you look at ... everything.

Are there things about Christ and your relationship with Christ which confuse you? Are there points in the Christian faith which make you question things? Are there things you would love to have which, if you got them, would not satisfy or fulfill other than momentarily? Are you searching for "your truth"? List a few of those things here.

Share with those you trust.

Day 575: Faith

Society has been changing, and it continues to change. One impact of these changes is that churches have lost a great deal of doctrinal certainty, even if they shout out to compensate. There is a loss of confidence to identify God working amongst us, and relay to the world what God is speaking within us.

In chapter 11 of the letter to the Hebrews, we are told, “Faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.”

Note: “being sure of what we hope for” – not “being sure of what we know.” This statement on faith is speaking directly into the blindness and uncertainty we live with (and which, frankly, humanity has always lived with). Faith, you could say, is not knowledge, but rather it is an understanding. As Rowan Williams write, “faith .. appears not as a system or comprehensive answer to all our problems. It appears quite simply in the form of ‘dependable relationship’.... You realize that when the signposts and landmarks have been taken away there is a presence that does not let you go.”

While we may be undependable and fickle, insecure and capable of betrayal, in our relationship with Jesus we have a Master and Teacher who will not go away. A loving one who will not betray us. Faith is our understanding that no matter what, through Christ we have a Master who will not let us go. In God the Father, we have a Creator who loves us no matter what. While we may not be able to understand, while we may not be able to hold on, while we may not be able to face reality, in Christ we have a friend who understands, who will never let go, and who faces reality with us. That is faith.

Note down your ideal ‘dependable relationship.’ Now, talk to Christ about it.

Share with those you trust.

Day 576: Living faithfully

Like any real relationship, a faithful relationship with Christ is a two-way relationship.

What do you mean?

First, Christ asks us to be more confident in Him than we are in our own resources and capabilities. And then, He asks that He can be confident in us, too.

Confident how?

Recognizing that we do not have all the resources but being faithful to work towards the end-goal regardless. Being faithful in reaching out to the lost, the suffering, and the marginalized. Show what it is like to have faith in the one who simply does not let go. Praying for the mountain to be moved and then putting in all the hard work to move it. Praying for the tree to be uprooted and then putting in all the hard work needed to uproot it. Working together.

Christ fully knows what you are capable of, for He created and loves you. He wants a dependable relationship with you, and He desires not to let you go. Note some areas of your relationship with Christ which you'd like to improve on, and how you'd like it improved.

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 577: Hope

Living in a faithful relationship often needs motivation, for it requires work to keep it alive and engaged. That motivation is called Hope.

Hope? I thought hope was dreaming of a better future or something like that.

Hope is not just looking forward to a better future, hope is the confidence that the future is based on the past and present, that the relationship which God created us for, which Christ taught and died for, which He lives with us now for, will be further strengthened and enabled to continuously greater fulfillment.

Hope is based on the faith that relationship with Christ is a relationship in which He will not go away or abandon, but He will know us and see us and hold onto us – the us we were, the us we are, and the us we shall be.

You don't have to know everything, you don't have to figure everything out, you don't have to finalize who you are or what you mean – you are held in the loving gaze of one who already knows everything about you, has already figured everything out, and in whom all you have been, are, and will be, are present and real. Who you are is in the hands of God, and you are more than you will ever realize – and that's ok.

Hope is the confidence that your past, your present, and your future are held in the relationship you have through Christ with the Father, no matter how much (or how little) you currently understand. Hope comes with the realization that you are made in the Image of God, and that, if you allow it, you will increasingly show forth God in your life. Faith and Hope together enable patience, because in patience the confusions and uncertainties will be sailed through, in patience your true self will continue to be revealed, and in patience Christ will become one with you.

Describe your hope.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 578: Choosing

Our modern society is great at giving us choices. We can order a variety of coffees. We can have a multitude of cereals. There are many types of cars to choose from. We are “free” to choose – but the expectation is that we shall choose! And, that we have already chosen.

The expectation is that our choices will focus on enhancing our physical self – our wealth, our comfort, our desires for diversity and pleasure – so we are given choices that, in the grand scheme of things, don’t really matter – because the assumption is that we have already chosen that the only things that matter are whatever we are consuming in the present moment, in the present life.

Constantly confronting us with superficial choices obscures our ability to ask and focus on deep questions about the root of our being. Such an assumption loses touch with the deep desires which define us – the desire for community, for life, for love, for belonging. The most important choice is to pursue, or not, the deepest rhythms of life, the context in which we can claim and grow in a deep and satisfying relationship with God. The desire towards something larger than ourselves which gives us meaning and purpose. The meaning and acceptance of an eternal relationship. Love.

The most important choice is to choose (or not) love. The acceptance of receiving. Releasing anxiety. Permitting ourselves to be enriched and given to. Openness to joy. A deep contemplation of the world, humanity, individual humans, God. Pursuing what is healthiest and delighting in who that pursuit is for.

The dependable presence which never leaves, which holds us in a gaze which truly knows us, which witnesses forever to our being and its value, which desires our health and welfare, that invites us and welcomes us into an ever-fuller relationship: that presence is love.

What choices do you make on an individual basis? Have you ever chosen not to buy or partake in something because that conflicted with a deeper value you have? Have you chosen to pursue the fullest realization of who you are created as? Have you chosen to pursue a relationship with the Living Love? Capture some of your thoughts here.

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 579: Working Together

As Rowan Williams writes, “it is a great challenge for the Church to be a place that is dependable, a place that is patient. It is a great challenge for the Church to become a place sufficiently still for people to open up, sufficiently quiet and still for people to learn that they can receive what the ultimate truth of the universe wants to give them.

“The gospel of God, as the New Testament puts before us, is good news about an eternal presence, an agency and intelligence wholly committed to who we are and who we shall become. Wholly committed to our growth into what we are made to be, and to each person in our distinctiveness. God offers us life, peace, presence to ourselves and to Him; a gift that costs us everything and yet is freely given as a gift without cost: a power devoted to the fullness of life.” (*Being Disciples*, pp 33-34)

Faith, Hope, and Love are central to discipleship. The church is to be a place where, together, disciples may realize the nature to which we are present in its eternal, unchangeable, radiance and glory. A place which houses Christ, all the time.

We all come from different backgrounds, live different lives, and have different perceptions and understandings of reality. We are all called by God into a full, complete, and loving relationship with Him, and through Him, with each other. If each of us encourage each other to enter into such a relationship, with patience, then together the presence of Christ may be realized not just individually but in community. Pray for your fellow believers, pray for your church, pray for Christ, that He may be successful in full and complete relationships with both – and pray for yourself as well. List what may be blocking a full relationship with Christ, and what changes you may make to mitigate such blockages.

Share as you feel appropriate.

Day 580: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! Fill yourself with Light. In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God. Be in shalom. Love. Pursue what is healthiest. Order your life as one pursuing facilitating as many people as possible to find the Kingdom of God. Be brave, trust God, Love.