

In the Gospel today, Jesus is talking to some Pharisees who do not believe in him. By his words he calls them to faith to believe. And by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, he calls us to believe in him, as well.

³⁶do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? ³⁷If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” (John 10.36-38)

Jesus uses every means at his disposal to work faith in these men. He uses the words he says, the miracles he performs, and the testimony he gives. You have no faith when I say, I am the Son of God? Then look at what I do and Let my works testify that I am in God and he is in me and He is my Father and I am his Son.

With his words and his works, Jesus is saying, ‘Believe in me. Have faith in me. Be faithful to me. And you will receive eternal life. You will be forever kept safe in the hand of Almighty God.” part of this faithfulness to which Christ calls us demands of us that we take up the disciplines we’ve been considering and attempting throughout this holy season of Lent. The Holy Spirit, working faithfulness in us, informs and cultivates and motivates every one of our Lenten disciplines.

So, we perform our acts of charity in Christian joy. We fast to train our bodies for holiness in this life and to prepare them for perfection in the life to come. We pray to make our needs known to God and to take hold of God’s promises in Christ. We obey God’s commands that our works may testify to Christ’s divinity, just as his works did. We serve

one another in Christian love. We work to provide for our needs and the needs of our brothers and sisters, that their faithfulness may neither be shaken nor endangered by a lack of any bodily need. And, we worship in praise and thanksgiving to God for all he does for us.

All these Disciplines of Lent are a particularly important part of our faithfulness to Christ. But by themselves they are incomplete. By themselves they certainly have some earthly and temporal benefit, and maybe even some spiritual benefit. But for us to truly know and experience the true benefits of our Lenten discipline, all our Christian discipline must flow from faithfulness to Christ and from no other source.

So, in faithfulness, we give to others in need because we hear our Shepherd’s voice and follow him in acts of charity and generosity. We fast during Lent (and at other times) because we know that Christ has given us a seat at his heavenly banquet table. We pray to take hold of Christ’s promise that no one will ever pluck us out his hand. We obey God’s commands because the Scripture cannot be broken and Christ has fulfilled the commandments on our behalf and freed us to live in them. We serve one another because Christ serves us by his life, death, and resurrection and by his ascension and promised return. We work because God our Father has sent his Son to us, and by his works, the realities of heaven are revealed in our midst. We worship, because in our worship, Christ does his work upon us saving us redeeming us, making us holy through his precious Word and Sacraments.

We discipline ourselves in faithfulness to Christ because it is by Christ’s faithfulness that we are saved from sin, sealed for eternal life in the presence of God, and set free to live as God’s children here and now.

St. Paul says:

“we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

18 For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh—[the disciplines which I take up here and now—the life I live in the flesh] I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

(Galatians 2.16-20)

St. Paul is saying that: The disciplines of Lent do not save you, cannot save you, and will not save you. Neither will these Christian disciplines justify you before God. Only Christ, by His love, by His sacrifice upon the cross, by His faithfulness to God our father, saves your body and soul and secures eternal life for you.

Thus, saved by God’s grace in Christ Jesus, we discipline ourselves in faithfulness to Christ that we might not build again on the crumbling foundation of sin. In faithfulness to Christ, we live as Christ lives, for Christ faithfully lives in you and me and all who have faith in him.

So, keep up your discipline in faithfulness to Christ. Now, during Lent, and all your days. Give. Pray. Fast. Obey. Serve. Work. Worship. Through these holy disciplines, exercise your faith, grow in the

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discipline of your faith, and be strengthened in your faithfulness to Christ. Christ is faithful to you and Christ will keep you in his hand - during Lent, during Easter, and for all the days yet to come - all the way to eternity. And he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1.6b)

God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.