



Sunday, October 18, 2020
20th Sunday After Pentecost
Matthew 5:14-16

Pastor Christian Marien

The Impossible Reality of God

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

The story is told of a young woman who was preparing to be confirmed. One day, the week before her confirmation, she told her father – who happened to be the pastor of the church – she was not sure she could go through with it. She wasn't sure she believed everything she was supposed to believe, at least not enough to make a promise before God and her congregation to believe those things forever. Her father told her, "What you promise when you are confirmed is not that you will believe this forever. What you promise when you are confirmed, is that this story of Jesus is the story you will wrestle with forever."

Welcome, my friends, to the impossible reality of God.

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven."

(Matthew 5:14-16, The Message)

Or to remind you of the words spoken to you at your baptism: *Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.* You may not remember those words, but I bet your parents, your grandparents, your Godparents, members of the congregation do. You see, that is the thing about faith – we hear so often about needing to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Of course, if you are open, ready, able to sit in the midst of unanswered questions and unknown ends to moments of adventure and wandering... Yet most of us, I would argue, find that personal friendship with Jesus more difficult than we imagined it to be. And if you are one of those who are struggling this day to know that personal relationship with Jesus – take a deep breath. God has already figured that out for you.

Stand up and look around – right now – stand up – turn around – and take in the crowd that has gathered this day to celebrate and support and join you in worship of our God. You come to this moment of confirmation – not alone – in truth, you have never been alone. Those who have loved you – yes, even those who are no longer present in this life, have carried you and brought you this far by faith. And the good news is that these same people who love you will continue to be present in your life – they will love you, support you, walk beside you, pray for you, and help you to let your light so shine in all the moments to come when you will wrestle with this story of Jesus in the days to come.

And that, my friends, is the impossible reality of God. Speak the words of the creed this day, *"I believe in God the father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. I believe in the Holy Spirit."* Speak the words aloud. Speak them publicly. Speak them into the silence of the world when what we know about God and the mystery of what we do not know about God collide. The answers that come in the silence will bring you peace when you are afraid. The answers that come in the silence will bring you hope when you are overwhelmed. The answers that come in the silence will bring you life. The answers may come through your parents, your family, your friends – but trust me, those answers come from God.

Not because you have a deeply personal and powerful relationship with Jesus but because the same God who, by grace, breathed life into your body when you took your first breath is the same God who will, by grace, measure the beats of your heart and every breath you take in this life. Until the day when with your last breath –

you let go of this life for the promised life to come in the Kingdom of God. And it is there my friends – that you will find the answers to all the questions unanswered this day.

In the Kingdom you will know only peace. In the kingdom you will know only hope. In the kingdom you will know only life. And then you will know that all the wrestling with the story of our Savior in this life has made all the difference. So welcome, welcome – to the impossible reality of God. Thanks be to God! Amen.