

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jun 26th 2013

Today's scripture readings seem to be about God's promises. In Genesis, we hear the story of God's promise to an aged Abram, that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. The psalmist proclaims, "The Lord remembers his covenant forever" and "Look to the Lord in his strength; seek to serve him constantly". In Matthew, Jesus warns the disciples to be aware of false prophets, who come in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. Jesus tells the disciples, "by their fruits you will know them".

There's an old hymn that I love called Standing on the Promises. It's an upbeat song that makes you feel like marching. The opening refrain is:

Standing on the promises of Christ my King,

Through eternal ages let His praises ring,

Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,

Standing on the promises of God.

And there's a new song by Tenth Avenue North called Worn. In that song the refrain is:

I know I need to lift my eyes up, but I'm too weak, life just won't let up.

I think I usually tend to identify with the latter song. I want to stand on God's promises, but life tends to knock you down. It's difficult to stand on God's promises when you're flat on your back. It's hard to focus on God, when I'm focused solely on myself.

As a parent I've run into numerous situations where I've had to hold a young child while they receive a shot or the doctor stitches them up. I can explain to my son that this is to make them better and I want to help them. They still have that look in their eyes asking, "why are you helping this person hurt me? Shouldn't you be saving me from them?" As a parent, I can tell you, that look really hurts. I wonder if that's how God feels when I complain to him that I should not be in this situation or He should have saved me from my current circumstance. Good grief, God, don't you care about me?

Don't I matter? I think it's normal to feel this way. When God told Abram he was going to give Abram some land, Abram's response was to ask how he could know this would really happen.

Even Jesus cried out, My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? I also know that Christ endured some pretty horrible things because of his love for me. If, instead of complaining and asking God to rescue me, I simply focused on God's love for me, his promise to be with me, that he will never forsake me and the fact that he wants the best for me, maybe I would be better able to handle some of life's inevitable storms.

God's promises are not something I can earn. And, happily, they aren't something I can lose by complaining too much. Knowing Christ does not guarantee a smooth ride through life. Just the opposite. However, knowing Christ means I can weather anything life throws at me.

My prayer today is for those of us whose prayers are focused solely on ourselves. That our focus would be on God and his will for us as his servants. That we would persistently pray for God's guidance in our lives.

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