

A Measure of Faith –

A sermon for The 2nd Sunday of Lent [APCM] 2014

Introduction;

I see these men in my imagination

.... men who once lived and worked
and walked the very lanes and byways we've walked

.... I sense their passion
.... feel their conviction
.... I stand in awe of their faith

.... men who brought Christianity to
this once barren and remote kingdom
in the North of England and the Scottish Borders

Cuthbert and Bede *[of course]* were the big hitters
the ones who's ministry *[and faith]* always gets mentioned over

[over] those who seemed to have no more than a walk-on role

Perhaps then *[perhaps]* it's time to redress the balance

.... let the underdogs have their day [I say]!!

Move;

One day a young man made his way to our part of the world

He came from some place they call ***"York"***

his destination was just a day's trek to the North from here
to the Anglo-Saxon township of Yaevering

.... the year was 627
.... and he was called Paulinius

And the reason he travelled this far north
to this desolate and dangerous place
was for no other reason
than to persuade the Northumbrian Warrior King Edwin
to accept Christianity
[.... no small task for an underdog]

because *[Paulinius reckoned]*

.... if the King did
.... then the people would

So the King called his advisers *[yet more underdogs]*

And one of them responded
by saying this to the King

*“When you sit at table with your Lords and Vassals in the winter –
with a great fire and all is dark and cold outside
and the storm is howling bringing the snow and the rain
it happens that a little bird flies into the hall*

*It comes in at one door
and flies out through the other
[someone might try explaining that move to our precious bats]*

*For the moments that it's inside the hall
it doesn't feel the cold
but as soon as it leaves your sight
it returns to the dark of winter*

*It seems to me that the life of the human person is much the
same.*

*We don't know what went before
and we don't know what follows*

*If this **new faith [Christianity]** can
speak to us surely of these things –
it is well for us to follow it.”*

And happily for us - they did.

They found the answer they sought in the message of Jesus.

Every age poses the same questions

.... and we ask them differently
as we are growing up
than in middle age or old age

.... where do we come from?
.... why are we here?
.... what is the meaning and purpose of life?
.... why is joy so transient

.... and how do we handle pain/sickness/death that comes to
us all.

And the big question: ***Is there life after death?***

And the answer came from the Masters table 2,000 years ago
it eventually made its way
to this obscure part of the world 600 years later
and continues to flourish here today

.... we find something of the answer
in the person of Jesus and his Gospel

Yes, *[there's much that remains mystery]*
.... but that's precisely where faith comes in

I use my mind
and make the leap of faith to what is beyond.

Let's just pause for a moment and reflect on that

.... it is through faith alone we are fed and nourished

.... and by faith we are sustained

***.... is this not what all members of the Anglican Church sign up to
when they stand to Affirm their faith every Sunday morning?***

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith.

We believe and trust in one God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Words we say on Sunday

This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith.

*We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

.... but what [*I ask*]

[*what*] about the rest of the week??

... [*what*] about **our measure of faith Monday to Saturday?**

Link;

Cardinal Hume who had a gift with words would put it this way.

He would ask people;

*"In your relationship with the Lord
are you a Sunday acquaintance or a weekday friend?"*

meaning is the person of Jesus so real [*to you*]

and do you let the living power of his Gospel

and the measure of your faith

enter and fashion every area of your life

every waking hour *of every day?*

Shift;

That's essentially the question I've set myself this Lent

[so forgive me if it crops again over the next few weeks]

Some of you might remember
I touched on this last time I preached
on Quinquagesima [*or the Sunday before Lent*]
[... *I think it's worth repeating*]

.... it went something along these lines;

Jesus said [*just as he was about to leave Galilee for Jerusalem*]

".... I must be on my way"

".... and with that
the disciples followed His way ...
and unbeknown to them
He was leading them
in the last [*and final*] push towards Jerusalem
and we know they were in a somewhat confused
state

.... and maybe the bottom line is
we end up just as confused and bewildered as they were

.... and we can do no more than did His friends

.... we turn our backs on the comfort
and familiar territory we occupy now

.... we set out with ***faith*** [*and confidence*]
to a new Jerusalem
in the assurance of his company

.... just as confused
but following his direction

.... and we might take comfort from another great Saint

.... Augustine [*one of the early [and most important] Church Father's*];

put it like this;

*“Faith is to believe what we do not see; [he wrote]
the reward of this faith is to see what we believe”*

To journey with Christ is to journey in **faith**:

".... Lord, that I may receive my sight." [said the blind man]

*“ Lord [said the Canaanite woman]
Son of David - have mercy upon me
my daughter is suffering*

Vision is the reward of faith

And all along the way to Jerusalem,
[the road to our spiritual destination]
we dip and dive
and weave and wander [... and wonder]
just as did our compatriots with walk-on parts *[the disciples]*
.... and Paulinius
.... and King Edwin

.... such is the mystery of our faith

Move;

And then remarkably *[about]* three years ago
[and after much prayer and deliberation]
someone else followed in almost the same footsteps as Paulinius

.....it was a step of faith *[profound faith]*
by one who felt the call of God
to walk alongside us on this long road to our spiritual destiny

and to share in our vision

to feed *[and nourish]* the people
to support and nurture each other in our journey of faith
to reach out and be of service in the community
to share with our neighbours
the love of God the Father
and the truth of God the Son
through the power of God the Holy Spirit.

This surely *[by any measure]* is what faith *[our faith – the faith of the church]* is all about

and the question must be *[and what better time to ask – than on the day of our APCM];*

.... the question must be

..... are we really *[honestly]* up for it

.... is our faith in Jesus - real or notional

.... do we live out our faith more by routine/lip service

And surely we thank God for Joanna's journey north

and the ministry she shares with Ian

and for her faith by the bucketful

the road hasn't always been easy for her or for some you here

this morning *[then was it ever meant to be]*

some might say that *[on occasions]* we are confused

and the vision has been lost to us

[but is that not the way of faith]

Which takes me to one that one verse that hit me right between the eyes this week;

Then Jesus answered,

*"Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And
her daughter was healed from that very hour.*

Have Faith

.... have faith that we are His disciples and all those with seeming
"obscure *walk-on parts*" have a part to play
and are just as important to Christ

.... have faith in what we are about as a church serving this
community

.... have faith that where Christ is - there is no barren and
desolate place

.... have faith in Joanna's ministry and leadership

.... have faith that in fourteen hundred years from now
future generations will know the Lord in this place

.... have faith we all travel the same journey

.... *have faith in the Lord – Always*

Amen