

"Faith Talk"

Scriptures:

OLD TESTAMENT:

Exodus 32:7-14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it & sacrificed to it and have said, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt. (*Moses had been on Sinai for nearly 6 weeks, contributing to Israelites' panicky behavior. Had he died or run away? Would he ever come back? Broke commandment of new covenant w/ God*)

"I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may turn against them &* that I may destroy them. The I will make you into a great nation."

But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. "O Lord," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'it was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains & to wipe them off of the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac & Israel, to whom you swore by your own self "will make your descendants all this land I promised them & it will be their inheritance forever.'" **Then the Lord relented & did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.**

NEW TESTAMENT:

EPISTLE: I Timothy 1:12 I am grateful to Christ Jesus out Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me Faithful & appointed m to his service.

GOSPEL: Luke 15: 1-10 Now the tax collectors & sinners were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners & eats w/ them".

Then Jesus told them this parable: Suppose one of you has a 100 sheep & loses 1 of them. Does he not leave the 99 in the open country & go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends & neighbors together & says, "Rejoice w/ me. I have found my lost sheep." I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Or suppose a woman has 10 silver coins & loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house & search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends & neighbors together & says, "Rejoice w/ me; I have found my lost coin." In the same way, I tell you there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

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I will sing my opening prayers w/c is part of the appointed Psalm for today.  
Join me, if you like:

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O god, and renew a right spirit within me.

This morning, I will tell you 3 things that I know FOR SURE:

1. That when my Soul leaves this body God will take it to heaven, I am saved; I have salvation! Not by anything I've done on my own, but because of God's infinite love. This I know: **God is a spiritual God!**
2. That God chose me, I am a chosen, adopted, child of God! He chose me to be His. He created me (& all people) to be in relationship with Him. He created us to be the best, the utmost, of what we've been made to be. **God is a relational God.**
3. I also know that living day by day, (sometimes hour by hour, moment by moment), as a chosen child of God, is still a very difficult task. **Life is a hard row to hoe.** How do I live faithfully in this world as it is? Through the difficulties of life, being saved in the after life & being God's chosen one does not always bring the comfort or ease I would prefer.  
1. I'm saved by a spiritual God. 2. I'm chosen by a relational God. 3. I find this life on earth challenging.

I was born March 26, 1954, the 7<sup>th</sup> child of a 7<sup>th</sup> child, Lutheran daughter of a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Lutheran Pastor, I came out of the womb a believer, a Christian, (a Lutheran) knowing that I was saved by God. Salvation story is a part of me.

I tell you that I was 7<sup>th</sup> child of a 7<sup>th</sup> because then you know that I grew up in a socially rich environment. I had the advantage of watching how my older siblings maneuvered life's experiences. I could see how different experiences could create varied perspectives on life.

My mom's Lutheran siblings were a great (sometimes "grave") influence on me also. I say, "Grave " because, my g'pa was the superintendent at Concordia Lutheran Cemetery upon which Mom & her family grew up. About 5 years after meeting my father @ Concordia Lutheran Seminary, she became engaged to him at the mausoleum grave of CFW Walther. My Dad, his

father before him & his father before him were all Lutheran pastors.

My Dad baptized me on Easter morning, April 18th at the font of Immanuel Lutheran, Grand Forks, North Dakota (his own parish). In that moment, God claimed me as his own, I was born again, didn't do a thing on my own to receive this birthright. A couple months later, our family relocated to Edmonton, Canada where Dad gave up parish ministry for Education as he took on the roll as President of Concordia Teacher's College there. So my 1<sup>st</sup> 5 years of life were spent on a Lutheran College campus, in the safe environment saturated with a community of believers who gave me lots of positive attention.

The year I began kindergarten, we returned to the US, Chicago area specifically. My Dad was called to be a prof @ Concordia Teacher's College, River Forest. My folks enrolled 6 of their children into the local Lutheran schools; Wally, the eldest was sent away (@ 15 yrs old!) to Concordia prep school to become a Lutheran Pastor. Preachers were a given in my family & Dad continued to preach @ area Lutheran churches just about every Sunday. He made me aware of the intense responsibility to be God's voice from the pulpit! Forms of entertainment for our family included playing Bible Baseball, Bible 20 questions, Bible Charades...

How easy it was for me to just know that I am Jesus' little lamb. I identified with the characters in the Bible: I had dreams like Joseph did (plus I was the youngest & dad's favorite) I liked to sing like the boy King David. I knew God loved me (my dad often reassured me when I was sad, "smile, God loves you.) I wanted to share my joy and to share that story. (If female pastors would've been acceptable in those days I may have made that career choice.) How easy to know I was chosen how easy it was to believe. I was inspired & felt called to be a Joseph or David or St. Paul!

I remember at a very young age, thinking to myself that wishing on a star or when blowing out Birthday candles that I was praying; talking to myself was praying, God & Jesus were just always there inside my head, beside me.

Confirmation classes culminated in the affirmation of my faith in **God the Father, Son & Holy Spirit** at the age of 13 years. Having been steeped in this richly Biblical & Lutheran environment, my faith continued to be firm. My pastor bestowed the following verse on me:

**Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach & admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Col 3:16** Now I was an adult Christian. I felt that word within me, I loved teaching, learning, singing. I felt "at home" in our church building and I tried to be grateful for all of my blessings.

OK, you're saying this tells you why I know that I am saved and that I am chosen, but what about you? How are you to know the same? In worship, God comes to us through the scriptures. Today's readings prepared me for my message.

**Old Testament Reading** is the story of the Israelites wandering through the desert & Moses getting stuck on Mt Sinai w/ God for a long time. These "chosen" people had no clue what had happened to their leader, Moses. Is it any wonder that they became restless? It is understandable that they decided they didn't need to answer to God; their ego minds caused them to create their own god. In verse 9 God says to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are." The reading however concludes with verse 14, "And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people."

God loves his people. He has a relationship with us! God is a relational God. He wants to save each & every one of us! God is a Spiritual God.

**The Gospel** is a story about Jesus hanging out with the riff raff of the day ("tax collectors & sinners") & telling them parables of their salvation, of them being "chosen ones" ("this man welcomes sinners & eats with them" verse 2.) Here is more Biblical evidence that God, through Jesus, is a Relational God. He meets us people where we are. Jesus loved us enough to live and die for us. Evidence that God is a loving & Spiritual God.

Having this knowledge of salvation & of being God's chosen one is a beautiful thing, but when my 1st husband could not decide between my best friend and me, & my first marriage broke up, that knowledge did not take away the pain or the difficulty in knowing what to do next. Nor did these truths tell me how to help my husband Bill when he was suffering from bipolar illness; or give me the key as to how to make it better for him or for us, his loving family.

Knowing that I am saved and I am chosen to be God's special child on earth is powerful knowledge, but it doesn't necessarily help me get to sleep at night when I am out of work and unsure how I'll make a living from day to day. I think that life itself can be our cross to bear as we struggle mightily to BE that person whom God created us to be.

Yet- hope in my salvation & knowing God loves me unconditionally -whether I live up to my potential or not- can help with the day-to-day grind. Christ came down from heaven and showed us how we can live, it's recorded in the Scriptures. Centering my life in Christ, trying to follow His example helps me to rise above whatever condition life sets before me. Worshipping the Trinity- God the Creator, Jesus the Redeemer & Holy Spirit within me- **does** help me in my times of trial.

Seeing how Jesus lived His life and attempting to mimic it has brought me aid. Jesus lived in the moment, focusing on doing God's will, and loving everyone whom He met. Today's Gospel, the parable of the lost sheep is profound. Not only does the

shepherd "leave the 99 in the wilderness & go after the one that is lost until he finds it" but then he "lays it on his shoulders & rejoices" (verses 4 & 5) Then, "he calls together his friends & neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'" The reading continues to point out that there is great joy in heaven over even one sinner who repents.

Repenting means turning away from old, hurtful habits and actions. Repenting includes acknowledging that we are sinful and cannot by our own reason or strength free ourselves from the negative ruts that our "old Adam" seems determined to follow. Repenting is admitting that we need God to help us be what He created us to be.

Most of you know that yoga practice has become important to me. I thank God for what I've learned through this science called 'yoga' because it has given me physical tools to assist me in living up to being that chosen disciple of Christ. It has taught me to be in the moment by focusing on my breathing, which keeps my mind in the present tense. Yoga teaches to perceive each moment as new & unique, freeing one from their sinful past, and from that negative rut! My ego mind is proud and interferes with God's & my humble relationship. Yoga also reminds me that our bodies were created as God's temple and with homeostasis, meaning that, without the interference of our ego mind, our physical body can balance itself out.

Yes, I know that I am saved and that I am chosen. I know life on this planet has so many challenges that sometimes seem more than I can bear. But I also know that **praying, worshipping, and emulating Christ's example** will continue to give me the strength that I need to meet the challenges in today's world. Jesus wept, so it's ok if I do too.

As a spiritual being in a loving relationship with God who created me to be His temple I am secure in my purpose in life. Until that day when my Soul does leave this body I pray that with

the help of the Holy Spirit, I will be able to live up to the potential that God placed within me. (But it gets scary when I think about "putting myself out there"!) In the meantime, I pray that I can honestly acknowledge my shortcomings & repent of them and truly feel the state of grace that is available to each one of us through our faith. I pray the same for you. We don't need to be or to do anything to receive God's love and grace! The tough part comes when we think we must DO something to earn His love. Let's let that go & just try to be His chosen brothers & sisters!

Dear God, thanks for your Spirit. Thanks for loving us so much & choosing us to be yours. Help us to be more like Jesus & just BE what we're created to be. Amen.