

Faith embraces every aspect of our lives.

Faith is utter trust in God.

Trust that is grounded in God's faithfulness to his Word.

God fulfills his promises and keeps his Word.

So why is faith so difficult?

Why do we keep trying to take things into our own hands?

That's what the guest at the wedding feast did.

Instead of waiting for the host to invite him to be seated,

he presumed to sit where he thought he deserved to sit

– right at the head table.

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I remember visiting my confessor one time

(yes, Lutherans do practice private confession)

– it was not long after I had just begun to make use of that healing time.

While confessing my sins, I said something like – “sometimes I forget to pray, but I'm basically a good person.”

My confessor scowled at me. He said – Really?

You want to make that claim on your own behalf before God?

Why do you want to try to save yourself?

Let Jesus do the heavy lifting.

You are a sinner – Period. Let Jesus save you.

I had presumed to try to absolve myself on the basis of my self-imagined goodness

instead of letting Jesus do it on the basis of his death and resurrection.

I was just like that wedding guest -- afraid

### **The opposite of faith is fear.**

The wedding guest feared that he would be overlooked by the host, considered unimportant.

In the confessional, I feared that God in his omnipotence would in fact not forgive my sins without my help.

Both I and the wedding guest were embarrassed by our foolishness.

Better, says the wisdom of Proverbs and echoed by Jesus,

is to be humble before the Lord,

trusting his mercy and

allowing God to demonstrate his trustworthiness.

The wedding guest who humbly sat in the back of the room had nothing to lose.

Even if he remained there,

he had been invited,  
had a seat, and was part of the festivities.

**But what joy when the host came to him and said “Friend, come up to a better seat!”**

What joy I experienced in that confessional when, after the terror of knowing that God is free – to forgive or not to forgive

– I heard the words spoken by Jesus himself through the confessor:  
I forgive you all your sins.

Those words were as powerful as the hand of my Savior reaching to pick me up from my kneeling position – giving me a better seat in his presence.

**Faith trusts God to put us in the right place in his realm.**

Faith does not presume on the basis of our own goodness,

but **relies entirely on what Jesus has done**

**to make access to God possible for us.**

Faith even extends to our daily lives.

In our reading from Hebrews we heard:

*5 Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for Jesus has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." 6 So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"*

**Greed is an expression of fear – and fear is the opposite of faith.**

Greed fears that at some point, we will not have enough.

That at some point, there will be something we want that we will not have enough to buy.

**But God has promised never to leave us or forsake us.**

Faith in God's promises permits us to be content with what God provides for our needs,

so that we have some to share with others in their need.

Those of you who are Downton Abbey fans will recall that one of the main occupations of the aristocracy

was to provide employment and basic needs for the poor.

**When God allows us to prosper and have more than we need,  
faith in him allows us to share our surplus.**

At the same time, if we are in need,

faith allows us to share our need with others so that they can overflow to provide.

**Faith in God is recognizing the people God uses to give us what we need.**

So what have we learned – four things:

1. Faith allows us to be humble so that God can lift us up.

2. Faith allows us to be content with what we have so that we can overflow to provide for others in their need.
3. Faith relies entirely on Jesus for our eternal life, so that we are free to serve God and others simply for the joy of it.

*8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

*15 Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

The fourth thing is this:

**Faith allows us to live sacrificially** – in love toward God and in love toward our neighbors.

Sacrificial living is giving away something we might prefer to hold onto.

When we make the Sunday morning sacrifice of praise to God,

we are giving away our time to sleep in,

read the newspaper,

or have an early brunch.

**We are giving away our energy, our pride,**

**and our self-absorption**

**to direct ourselves to God and seek his face in worship.**

When we sacrifice on behalf of others,

we spend time and energy on them,  
and we give to meet their needs.

Sacrificial financial giving is returning to God the first fruits of our labor  
– not what is left over after we've paid for the luxuries of

- cable tv,
- data plans,
- vacations and spa treatments.

When budgeting,

make your charitable giving the first decision you make.

Then fill in the rest of your spending.

Sacrificial giving means giving away what might otherwise have gone  
for a desired luxury.

**Faith allows us to live sacrificially**

**because we know God has promised to care for us**

**and provide for us**

**and we are content with what we have.**

Faith makes us humble,

content,

saved by Jesus,

and free to live sacrificially in praise and thanksgiving toward God and in loving service to others.

And how do we get this faith?

For the answer, I turn to our Lutheran Augsburg Confession, Article V:

That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, [21](#) the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear [31](#) the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake.

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God and receiving the Holy Spirit that comes with that Word.

May it please God to give all of us abundant faith today and always.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.,

Amen