

# Talking Points for Reconnecting with Abiding Scriptural Truths

- 1) The life of faith *always* requires leaving what is familiar and comfortable. Faith is an “action verb.”
  - i. The Bible presents Abraham as the ultimate archetype of faith. God called him to leave the comfort of Ur for a life unknown. *Genesis 12*. This example is raised up to Christians as the pattern and ultimate expression of faith. Hebrews 11. Book of Common Prayer, page 305, questions 3, 4, and 5.
  - ii. In the Gospel for Pentecost XX (*Mark 10:17-31*), Jesus implores the rich man to gain freedom from the wealth he trusts for his security and status, that he might discover greater riches: “the grace to help in time of need” *Hebrews 4:16*.
- 2) God is always creating life where we can only see emptiness and death. What inhibits us from reaching out in new ways to serve the huge mission field around us? Might we be fearing forms of death: the end of familiar *mores*, failures, loss of power or control? We have nothing to fear if we are following the One who walked the path to Easter.
  - i. “This is our story. This is our song.” Resurrection power is what brings us together on Sunday. And yet, we struggle to trust this truth Monday thru Saturday, in the context of our life issues. One useful scriptural reference:
  - ii. Jacob sees only death when his path is about to cross Esau’s with 400 men in his service, years after Jacob so greatly wronged his brother. By God’s grace, Esau’s heart is softened and he extends forgiveness and love. *Genesis 33*. Where anger and hurt are felt about current events, might a prayer for the healing grace manifest in this story be the best path to new life?
- 3) God is most easily manifest through unexpected people and unexpected ways.
  - i. The parable of the workers in the vineyard shows that God’s unconditional love is very generous. *Matthew 20:1-15*.
  - ii. Other examples are endless: Moses (the leader who could not give a speech), David (the least likely son), Paul (the persecutor), and most importantly, of course, the carpenter’s son from a backwater village.
  - iii. We treasure our churches as *reliable* places to encounter God. Might our dependence on them be preventing us from seeing and being part of God’s divine surprises? The gift of the Holy Spirit makes known that God intends for us to be agents of those surprises. We *are* equipped to manifest the powerful, transformative presence of Christ. Our world needs hope *now*. It can’t wait. God’s voice is urgent and relentless.
- 4) We have everything we need, so if we feel poor or anxious, we are trusting in something other than our intended blessings.
  - i. Scripture reminds us over and over again that we have *no* cause for anxiety: “Do not be afraid” *Matt. 14:27; Matt. 28:5; Mark 6:50; Luke 1:13; Luke 5:10; John 6:20; Acts 18:9*. “Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” *John 14:27*.

- ii. The Bible promises that the faithful have all that we need. *1 Timothy 6:17*. So, we preach a “theology of abundance.” But the time of many congregational leaders is spent anxiously looking for ways to pay bills. Where this is so, we must be struggling because we do not see the blessings that are meant to nurture ministry ... Settings outside our walls? Places of public engagement? Opportunities for collaborations?

5) Even if we make some errant choices, God can work with them.

- i. We don’t need to fear that any decision to sell a building or shift resources will lead to irretrievable harm. Present decisions are made in the best of faith. God has proven God’s ability to bring immense good even from the most ill-begotten acts. Jesus was born of the house and lineage of David, through his son Solomon, the fruit of David’s sin in stealing Bathsheba from a dutiful husband. Using the worst of sins, God accomplished nothing less than the salvation of the world!
- ii. We may tremble over our fitness to act with Isaiah (“Woe is me!” *Isaiah 6:5*), but so long as we move to, “Here am I; send me,” (*Isaiah 6:8*), we may trust that all does not rest on our merit. Jesus promises to sustain us with his peace. *Matt. 28:20; John 15:4; John 20:21*.

Thomas Merton wrote a profound prayer that speaks for us now: "Thoughts in Solitude"

MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
Nor do I really know myself,  
and the fact that I think that I am following your will  
does not mean that I am actually doing so.  
But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.  
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,  
though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore will I trust you always  
though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.  
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.