

God's Ten Promising Words (Part 2)

Co-missioners,

Last week Paul Jaster urged us to take a fresh look at what most of us have hitherto known only as God's "commandments." As he wraps up his argument today, Paul will give us abundant reason for repeating the Alleluias we've been saying at church these past two Easter Sundays.

Peace and Joy,
The Crossings Community

God's Ten Promising Words

by Paul Jaster

([continued from last week](#))

It Takes a Lot of Faith in the Crucified and Risen Jesus

In Luther's explanations to the Ten Commandments, he talks a lot about "fear" and "love." "We are to fear and love God so that..." he says nine times. But I think the bigger word behind them all is the word "faith." Faith not only in God's word of promise, but also in the One who is "the Word" of God and embodies all these promises: the Jesus revealed to us in the sacred scriptures, crucified and raised. I wish Luther would have said, "We are to fear, love and trust God so that..." all Ten Times (!) instead of once. That last verb is so important.



Paul Jaster with a confirmation class

It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, who is the Chosen One, the Giver of a God's own good and abundant life, to believe that the God you can know in Jesus has decided to be your God. And that this decision means a promising life for you. Especially when you feel unloved, let down, lonely, and abandoned.

It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, who teaches you his own precious prayer, to believe that God's name is powerful and does what it promises and that God hears your prayers and is with you in all of your afflictions including death and suffering, when almost everyone around you has a foul mouth that uses the words "God," "O Jesus," and "Christ" as expletives to be deleted, points of punctuation, and synonyms for "oh, shit." And when your prayers are not answered the way you think they should be answered. And when you cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me."

It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, who proclaimed in his hometown that the long-awaited year of God's favor is already there in his own person, to believe that God's

New Day has already come to you. And that it is still coming. And that the rest of it is worth waiting for. Especially, when it has not come as folks expected for close to 2,000 years. And your attendance at church is declining. And a growing number of people are biblically illiterate. And resting in God's word is no longer so widely observed or sacred in your own neck of the woods. And when you wonder whether your children will have faith and your faith will have children.

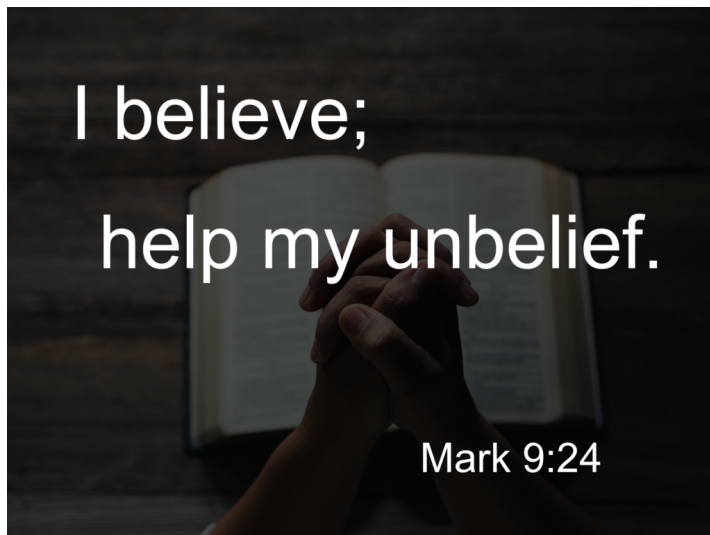
It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, who called God "Abba, Father" and gave you the power to become a child of God, to believe that you should honor parents when so many parents have fled the scene and are gone, or are drunken drug addicts and crackheads, or are abusive to you, or are absent workaholics, or are smothering. And when you are disrespectful of your parents, challenge their authority, and are resentful towards them. And your life is filled with so many regrets that the burden is paralyzing and overwhelming.

It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, who gave up his own life for you and rose again so that you might have his cruciformed and risen life too, to believe that all lives are precious when the streets are full of violence. And your body is embedded with generations of past traumas. And civil discourse is discarded for loud shouting, an iron fist, and a heavy hand. And bullets fly in classrooms. And kids are used as targets. And when there are all too many lives that are marginalized and do not matter.

It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, who turned water into wine at Cana and used wedding feasts as a superlative image of God's blessing, to believe that your sexual relationships should be healthy and your marriages should be sacred when early on-set, recreational sex is normative in your culture. Sex sells. People are sexually exploited. There is

agonizing infertility, rape, incest, cheating. Abortions and forced-births. And the God-created diversity in your family life and gender is not respected but criminalized. And a high percentage of the marriages around you, including perhaps your own, are torn and broken.

It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, who told you to not worry because God knows your every need and has your back, to believe that God is concerned about property and financial fairness when life isn't fair. And there is a large gap between the rich and poor. And a shrinking middle class. And a pile of indebtedness. Pensions are lost. Savings eaten by high inflation. Too-big-to-fail banks socialize the risks yet privatize the profits. A fair wage is not given nor a fair day's work. Greed and grievances rule. And your blood pressure goes up or down according to the stock market...assuming you even have something to invest in the first place. And you are living paycheck to paycheck.



Mark 9:24

It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, whose very name means "God saves," and who stood up for the dispossessed, spoke God's truth to power, and got crucified for

it, to believe that protecting names and reputations are important when in your own experience gossip is far more interesting. Magazines and social media thrive on the salacious. Politicians and news organizations deliberately lie to pad their pocketbooks. Church people are polarized and judgmental. One feels more important by putting other people down. And it is tempting to think and fear the worst about people rather than to champion and celebrate the best.

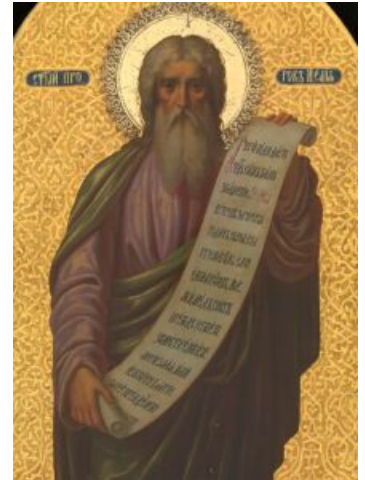
It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, who proclaimed that in him God delivers on God's promises and that the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the poor have good news preached to them, not to covet. And to live within your means. And be content. Live an uncluttered life. And not worry about the future. When the grass looks so much greener on the other side. And when you hoard what you have, and lament about what you don't have. And you are bombarded by an ungodly amount of commercial advertising targeted specifically to your demographic profile by cookies that track your past purchases. And when you would rather believe the lie that commercial products give than admit the truth that "one does not live by bread alone."

It takes a lot of faith in the crucified and risen Jesus to hear these "Ten Words" and keep them, promise style.

But that's the nature of a promise, isn't it? Promises are received by faith. For faith is like a "hand" that grabs on to the promises God makes in the crucified and risen Jesus...and then hangs on for dear life.

Why then should God's "Ten Words" of promise be any different? Promises that you hang on to sola fide. By faith alone!

The Necessity of Jesus Crucified and Raised



The Prophet Isaiah –Anonymous
Russian icon painter
wikimedia

It is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth that gives you solid, already-in-our-human-history, death-and-evil-defying grounds to believe and trust the “very same promise” God gave to his prophet Isaiah: “My word...that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I propose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

Human nature is such that you cannot attain God’s promised life the Moses way, the obey the commandments way, a path that depends on you. You can only attain God’s promised life the Jesus way, the trust in God’s word of promise to you way, the path that depends upon God’s work for you in Christ. That is why the crucified and risen Jesus is so necessary, and why God would rather be known as a promise maker and a promise keeper than a commandment giver, judger and demander.

It is the God of Jesus of Nazareth crucified and raised who has the “track-record” and the “street-creds” to proclaim that this God, this particular God, this one and only God, does indeed “give life to the dead and call into existence the things that do not exist” (Romans 4:17). If this God can fulfill promises in

the past in a new and surprising ways, this God can certainly fulfill promises in new and surprising ways now and into the future.

That's why these promises of God are still dynamite! The dynamism of God. The power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, including you.

Thursday Theology: that the benefits of Christ be put to use
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