

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

There are many stories of individuals who did things others thought impossible. When early explorers set out in ships to cross the ocean they were thought foolish. “You will certainly fall off the face of the earth.” Others assumed the sea was filled with huge monsters that would swallow ships whole. Yet, eventually someone said they would try anyway. Sure enough, it was possible to sail around the world. You didn’t fall off the face of the earth and weren’t eaten by monsters.

Before the Wright brothers most thought human flight was not possible. Many had tried different contraptions all the way back to Galileo, but none proved successful. Yet, the reason the Wright brothers were successful was they realized the assumptions of the past were wrong. They had to step out in faith and not become discouraged by those around them who thought they were crazy. Despite setbacks and disappointments, their tests were proved right and finally their flying machine did work.

I believe one of the main reasons Jesus came to this earth was to help us break out of the cycle of “it can’t be done.” He came to show us that God had a great plan for humanity to know joy and peace. He came to show us that all those who had come before had the wrong starting point. Everyone else settled for sinful humanity or humanity of the flesh as the norm. Jesus told us that having true faith in the Father and trusting in His providence can lead to impossible things like blind men seeing, lepers made clean, and even dead men coming out of their graves.

God had inspired Ezekiel the prophet to tell the people that even when they were in exile far from their own land they were not abandoned. God knew their plight and would restore them to the land. If they trusted they would see great things, yet many thought the prophet foolish.

When Jesus was told about the sickness of his friend Lazarus the smart thing would have been to rush to his side to cure him. Jesus trusted in the power of God to do something even greater. Martha and Mary thought it impossible that a man dead for four days could ever rise. No one can do that. Jesus asked them, “Do you trust that God can do all things?” Even though I am sure they couldn’t imagine what Jesus could do they trusted.

Jesus’ Apostles thought him foolish for going back to Bethany, just a few miles from Jerusalem. Surely the religious leaders and the Romans would be on the lookout. He would be doomed. Jesus asked them to trust in the power of God too. Despite their doubts they are willing die with Jesus. Jesus has so much more in store than that.

The miracle of raising Lazarus starts with trust. Jesus trusted in the Father, Martha and Mary trusted in Jesus and everyone who believed and went to Bethany saw the glory of God displayed. Jesus could trust in the Father because He knew that God’s grace alone healed the sick and now would raise Lazarus. No man could walk out of that tomb without the grace of God. So, Jesus calls Lazarus out of His tomb by the power of God.

Lazarus walks out looking something like a mummy. His friends and family now untie him and welcome him back into their lives. Just before they knew it was impossible for Lazarus to come to life. They weren’t even going to roll away the stone because “surely there will be a stench.” Death is permanent, so they think.

Jesus doesn't accept the limitations this world offers. He doesn't settle for seeing the world only as it is. No, He offers a new way of living and seeing. He offers the same things to you and me. Whatever limitations, sins, or death that is within us Christ has come to transform. He tells us not to allow the world with all its allures to blind us from seeing what is possible when we trust in God. It is God's grace that saves us, but it requires trust and faith to accept that power. Then we are brought together into a community of believers to strengthen and support one another. We do this today not only for our Elect, but we ask God to do that for each of us. We ask that we be made new so that we might be a light for others to see.