

### 7.3.2022 Trinity 3 (1 Peter 5)

On July 1, 1776, when the Second Continental Congress began meeting in Philadelphia, John Adams was there. On July 2, the delegates at the meeting voted in favor of declaring America's independence, and the following day Adams wrote these words to his wife, saying, "The second day of July 1776, will be the most memorable epocha, in the History of America... I am apt to believe that it (July 2) will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other from this time forward forevermore."

John Adams was a brilliant man, a Harvard-educated lawyer who led our nation's negotiations for peace with Great Britain. He was our first vice president, and the second president of the United States, but even the greatest minds often have difficulty predicting the future significance of a particular moment in time. When the delegates at the Continental Congress voted to declare independence, John Adams was certain July 2 would forever be celebrated, but as it turns out, the delegates formalized their decision two days later, and therefore the fourth of July turned out to be what he described as the "most memorable epocha" in the History of America.

The fact that we often cannot see the future significance of the present moment is important to remember, especially in difficult times. Consider these examples: Speaking of difficult times, when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and Moses confronted Pharaoh demanding that he let the people go so that they may worship God (Exodus 8:1), who could've imagined all that would soon come to pass? Who could've recognized the future significance of that moment? When Potiphar had Joseph thrown into prison for a crime he didn't commit, who could've predicted that moment would one day lead Joseph from prison to the position of ruler, second only to Pharaoh (Genesis 39-41). When Joshua was marching around Jericho, who would've thought that on the seventh day the walls would fall down (Joshua 6). David hiding in a cave (1 Samuel 22). Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 6). Saul blinded on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), and the greatest example comes on Good Friday,

when our Savior was crucified, dead, and buried. In the midst of that heartache and pain, who could've imagined the unspeakable joy of Easter Day (Matthew 27-28). The significance of a particular moment is not always evident in that moment.

The truth is, the Lord often leads His people through the valley of the shadow of death to the end that He may bring them to green pastures and still waters (Psalm 23). As we consider the news of our day: an unjust war, the ongoing pandemic, depression, violence, divisive politics, economic uncertainty... As we reflect on the many challenges we face in this moment do we despair, or do we, as St. Peter wrote in the Epistle, "*Cast all your care upon Him, because He cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). Do we despair, or do we dare to believe this moment, and every moment, has eternal significance, that God redeems all He allows, that He will work all things together for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28).

The saints dared to believe, and when you consider their examples: Moses confronting Pharaoh, Joseph in prison, Joshua marching around Jericho, David hiding in a cave, Daniel in the lion's den; when you consider these examples you recognize in each of them that these were people who, in the most difficult times, prepared for the future by trusting God with the present. These were people who, to use the words of St. Peter, patiently endured, humbling themselves "*under the mighty hand of God*" to the end that He may exalt them in due time (1 Peter 5:6). The world tells us to pridefully trust in ourselves, to rely on our own strength, but the biblical example that the saints set for us is to "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight*" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

*In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.* The difficulties, dilemmas, and decisions we face in this moment are all meant to be surrendered to God, to the end that He may assist us with His grace and bless our human efforts with His Divine power. The heroes of our faith surrendered all to God by relying on Him completely, crying out to Him constantly, and offering their selves, souls, and bodies to Him every moment of every day. They placed their lives in His hands completely, and in doing so, traded the mortal for the immortal, the temporal for the eternal, the natural

for the supernatural, and the same opportunity is ours today.

When we walk out the doors of this church, by the grace of God and the power of His Holy Spirit, we not only have the opportunity, we are called by our Savior Christ to live a life of eternal significance, no matter the cost, by placing all we are and all we have entirely in the hands of God, by setting our *"minds on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Colossians 3:2).

There's an old saying which would have us believe that some Christians are "too heavenly minded to be any earthly good," but in *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis argues that it is in fact the Christians who think most about eternity who are the most useful in this moment. Lewis wrote, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth thrown in: aim at earth and you will get neither."

The challenge we face this day, and every day, is to leave our mark on earth, precisely because our minds are occupied with Heaven. The saints we talked about this morning: Moses, Joseph, Joshua, David, Daniel and Paul, in the most difficult times, all left their mark on earth because their minds were occupied with Heaven. Now, as we confront the trials of our day: an unjust war, the ongoing pandemic, depression, violence, divisive politics, and economic uncertainty, we must be as bold and heroic in our faith as the saints were in confronting Pharaoh, prison, the walls of Jericho, or the lion's den. Bold, heroic faith, a gracious gift of God, leads us through the *"momentary affliction"* that is *"preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison"* (2 Corinthians 4:17).

The infinite difference between momentary affliction and eternal glory, the great chasm that divides the momentary trials of this life and the everlasting glory that awaits us in the next, brings us back to where this sermon began. Like John Adams on July 2, we may not be able to see the future significance of this day, but when we, in this moment, reach out in faith and leave our

mark on earth because our minds are occupied with heaven, what we will discover on the Last Day is that beautiful mark perfectly woven into the tapestry of eternity. So, when you go in peace to love and serve the Lord, reach out in faith, reach out in hope, reach out with love and by the grace of God, leave your mark on Earth.