

**Read Isaiah 55:1-9**

The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

*George Muller hadn't faced a situation quite like it. Before him were 120 orphans, expectantly seated at long dinner tables. But something at this mealtime tested the mettle of Muller's heart. On the dinner plates at that table was nothing but crusts of bread. Eager faces looked toward him, as if to say, "What's for dinner?" But he didn't know; the cupboard was bare, and the icebox was empty. There was no milk, and no money to buy food or drink.*

*What was George to do? It didn't take long for him to decide. He would do what he had done every other mealtime. He would instruct the children to bow their heads and join him in thanking God for the meal they were about to eat. He would praise God for the faithfulness of God's provision. And so he did. Muller prayed simply, directly, and with a heart filled with faith.*

*When the "amen" was pronounced, the plates still had nothing but bread crusts. But as the eyes of those 120 youngsters turned again to the head table, a knock sounded at the door. One of the boys was sent to answer. A moment later, he called out, "Mr. Muller, it's the vegetable man! He's got a lot of stuff for us!" There were many vegetables that would spoil if he didn't do something with them. While the vegetables were being unloaded, another person came to the door- the butcher! He had run out of ice at the end of a hot day and faced the prospect of awful, rotting meat. Could the orphanage use it? No sooner had he spoken the words than another amazing thing occurred. The milkman's wagon pulled up, overloaded with milk and dairy products, and needing desperately to do something with them!*

*Needless to say, it was quite the banquet that night. And it was the finest lesson in faith those orphans ever received. They had just seen the evidence of a spiritual law at work- the law of miraculous multiplication. God had transformed their measly bread crusts into the best meal they had ever enjoyed. He had honored their simple faith with a supernatural supply.*

Someone might refer to what took place that night a coincidence. I would argue it to be a divine appointment. *Would the same thing have happened had Muller not prayed, believing God for God's provision ahead of time for it? We don't know, but we do know that Jesus said we have not because we ask not. And we know that God's will for us is to walk by faith, not by sight.\** We are going to sing the hymn *We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight* as our closing hymn today.

The hymn references directly John 20 in which we read about Thomas doubting the real presence of Christ as he appears to the disciples after his resurrection.

In the hymn we will sing, “We may not touch His hands and side, nor follow where He trod; But in His promise we rejoice, and cry, “My Lord and God!” A request then for God to help us in our unbelief and may our faith abound.

God’s word is clear that the faith-driven life is the life God intends for us. In fact, Hebrews 11:6 says, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Trusting God explicitly, God provides for us absolutely; and we mustn’t be limited by what we see because God’s ways transcend human understanding. Like we read in Isaiah 55, “God’s thoughts are above our thoughts, and God’s ways are above our ways.”

As we dive a bit deeper into Isaiah 55, this prophecy invites the Israelites to come and sustain themselves on God’s nurturing word. God’s covenant, God’s promise to love them, provide for them, care for them, deliver them, and save them, as only God can do, is compared to a magnificent banquet to which the Israelites are invited and of which they can freely partake. The story of Muller’s simple, direct, and faithful prayer, the hymn *We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight*, and the reminder that God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts and God’s ways are higher than our ways in Isaiah, all charge us to ask:

How can we believe God above and beyond our ability, our resources, and our strength?  
In what ways can we trust God to provide supernaturally on our behalf?

Faith Yields! There are many things faith yields, all of them beneficial to us, which is why we make such a big deal about faith. But today I would like to focus in on just two that I believe are relative to us: **works and joy**.

**Works...** We are familiar with works because we have grown into “human doings.” Much of what we say and think we are, that is our effort to define our identity, is defined by what we do on a daily basis. One of the first questions we ask someone we are just meeting is, “What do you do?” From the answer we have the opportunity to open a floodgate of possibilities about what that says about them and then we can assess whether we might like to talk to them again. We all do it or have at least done it at some point. We place value of people, especially ourselves, and base value on what we do, and often leave who we are as a summation of our works. By doing this socially, we have, at least at times, begun to do it spiritually as well. Doing this, defining ourselves and others as “Human doings”, overlooks a very important faith perspective.

As works relate to faith, a very important clarification to make is that “We are saved by grace through faith, not by works.” Our salvation and hope in God for life eternal, which is our faith filled purpose on this earth, is not dependent on our works, but instead by the gift of God’s grace and our faith in that gift. As we are faith filled, God’s grace serves as a catalyst to our outpouring of works, which by relationship with the gift of the Holy Spirit living in us, are faith filled works. Faith in God yields good works.

On one hand we can consider our works on an island, focused on our individual yield. We can do this by quoting the fruits of the spirit Paul lists in Galatians 5:22-23, understanding that when we love others, share joy, are peacemakers, bear patience, etc., these are the good works of a faith filled life. Indeed, they are a good testimony.

On another hand we can consider our works as a body, focused on our collaborative yield. By this I mean production accomplished through the community of faith that gathers together. The collaborative yield is just the individual yield played out on a grander scale to accomplish God’s grander purpose. Our call to be the body of Christ in faith is “not fulfilled in a vacuum. It is not merely an individual responsibility, for we belong to one another and must think of one another, not just ourselves.”

A significant part of being the community of faith is the work of the Spirit divinely ordaining abilities in each of us to accomplish the church’s purpose on earth. The source of each ability, or gift, is God, and the nature of each gift is purely spiritual. That is why they are known as spiritual gifts.

*A.T. Pierson has observed 7 principles pertaining to spiritual gifts.*

- *Every believer has some gift, therefore all should be encouraged.*
- *No one has all the gifts, therefore all should be humble.*
- *All gifts are for the Body, therefore all should be harmonious.*
- *All gifts are for the Lord, therefore all should be contented.*
- *All gifts are mutually helpful, therefore all should be faithful.*
- *All gifts promote the whole Body’s health, therefore none can be dispensed with.*
- *All gifts depend upon the Holy Spirit’s empowerment, therefore none should be out of fellowship with God.\**

Perhaps I am biased towards them, but I think we have a remarkable staff here at FPCLY to help make things happen. Cory is great. Cat is great. Alex is great. Jody is great. Marcia is great. And I could go on. However, they are not all this community of faith is. This community of faith called FPCLY reflects who we all are together. The gifts of the

staff coupled with your gifts are the gifts God has provided for us today and that is the collaborative yield we will stand with. Is it enough? Yes. Because God has provided it. And it is our responsibility to be sure we are doing our part to volunteer, lead, give, plan, care, encourage, host, serve. There is a need for each and every one of us to not just receive the gifts God gives to us while we are here but share them with one another.

**Joy...** Faith in God yields joy. 1 John 1:1-4 is scripture that sums it up well. The firsthand accounts of Jesus have been shared. We have heard what our ancestors saw with their own eyes and touched with their own hands. The faithful life of Christ has been revealed. Do we believe it and have faith? Verse 4 says, "We are writing (sharing) these things so that our joy may be complete." Embodiment of faith maintains an upward and outward attitude, not an inward focus. We saw this play out in our "Impact" yesterday. True joy is found when we are focused on being connected to Jesus and serving others as a way to share the good news. To discover more, we can consider the word "JOY" broken down in a children's song that says,

*Jesus and Others and You,  
What a wonderful way to spell joy.  
Jesus and Others and You,  
In the life of each girl and each boy.  
J is for Jesus, who died in our place;  
O is for Others we know face to face;  
Y is for You, and whatever you do,  
Put yourself last to spell JOY.\**

What a great thought for getting out of our own ways, our own heads, our own funks. To experience joy in and through our lives, have faith in Jesus and serve, share, give, be with others.

Faith yields! There is no better time than now to trust that, lean in, and experience the fullness of God's goodness.

\*excerpts from *The 33 Laws of Stewardship: Principles for a Life of True Fulfillment* by Sutherland and Nowery