

October 16, 2022  
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 24

**Meditation:** What faith?

The other day I was reading an article, written by a young woman, titled 'Why I stopped going to church, even though I love Jesus and believe in God.' She cites three reasons. 1) going made me feel like I lost my rights. She explains that her mother forced her to go, which left her feeling that her right to decide was taken away. When she got old enough to live on her own, her mother was no longer there to force her to go, so she stopped. 2) going meant being tired. She didn't like waking up early to go to church, and says that Sunday is supposed to be "the day of rest." What time was the service she was attending? 6 a.m.? 3) she says going to church left her feeling socially isolated. She felt that she could not talk about something she was passionate about with friends and acquaintances. Doing so drove people away, leaving her socially isolated. But what about friends and acquaintances at church? Maybe the problem is that she just needs a new network of friends.

I wondered about the long-term implications of people deciding, for whatever reason, that they should stop attending church. I mean, just listen to these words taken from Psalm 78:5-7:

<sup>5</sup> He established a decree in Jacob  
and appointed a law in Israel,  
which he commanded our ancestors  
to teach to their children,  
<sup>6</sup> that the next generation might know them,  
the children yet unborn,  
and rise up and tell them to their children,  
<sup>7</sup> so that they should set their hope in God,  
and not forget the works of God,  
but keep his commandments;

All this was floating around my brain when I read today's gospel passage, especially when I hit the last sentence: "And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

What do you think?

Is it possible to be a Christian and not go to church?

How so?

What is the purpose of going to church?

Are we hardwired to be creatures of faith?

I think we are. I think everyone has faith. It's just that I don't think everyone has faith in God. Some people have faith in science to solve all of humanity's problems. Some people have faith in the economy to lift everyone out of poverty. Some people have faith in conspiracy theories. Some people have faith in.... well, you name it. I think everyone has faith in something. Some people happen to have faith in God. And I think that is the question that Jesus is asking. 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find anyone on earth that has faith in God?' Back to Psalm 78.

If nobody goes to church to learn about God, and nobody talks about God because they are afraid they will be socially isolated, where/how will people learn about God?

I think we need to constantly be exposed to God, in worship, in prayer, and in study, in order to learn about who God is. And, we need to share our faith with others, especially children and grandchildren. My wife learned her faith because her mother shared her faith with her daughter.

Is this not what Jesus is talking about? We need to be like the widow, constantly engaging with God, and with others.

Want to know the really interesting piece in all of this? It's that God has faith in us, never gives up on us, no matter what. Paul said it best, in his letter to the church in Rome: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39). Now that is a faith worth emulating.