

What Is Great Faith?

Sermon Notes for Aug 20 2017 at Brentwood

Ps 67 & Matthew 15:21-28



**Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is your faith!
Let it be done for you as you wish.”
And her daughter was healed instantly.
(Matt:15:28)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- It's been a week of confronting death – a beloved mother passing on peacefully in her 94th year (Miss Roz) – a dear friend going into palliative care (Cindy Johal) – and strangers mowed down by vehicles driven by hate – and I'm left with the question, "In the face of these realities, what is great faith?" – so let's ponder that quandary together for a few moments this morning, with Jesus' encounter with this woman in our minds
- There are three important insights into great faith that came together this week as I was searched by this passage and by these forms of death:
 - a. The faith that is assumed rather than mentioned in many of the stories of and about Jesus is God's faith in us – God has such faith in us that he took our flesh and dwelt among us - seen in our creations in the image of God and in God's persistence in reconciling with us and restoring us to our original purpose in that God's creation – to be central actors in the Commonwealth of God's SHALOM, walking humbly with God as they (the Holy Trinity) bring about greater justice, peace, and joy – God has faith in us to be part of that mission – in great faith, we wish for **this** SHALOM
 - b. Our faith is a grateful response to God's faith in us – it is a response, as Heinrich Botha reminded me in a stimulating conversation this week, that heals us for growth – God, through our encounters with Jesus, designed and directed by the Holy Spirit, heals us from the traumas of the past and opens up for us paths into a different and better future in nourishing relationships – that is God's restorative power – in our faithful relationship with God, the greatness of what God wishes becomes the greatness of what we wish – good words for those wishes are 'healing' and 'growth'
 - c. As our faith in God's faith in us grows, it continues to heal at deeper and deeper levels of our souls – our wishes are reshaped and reformed as we come to God over and over again in times of need, when our own resources upon which we have tried to rely become exhausted – perhaps

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that a key point to remember – we do not have the resources on our own to live life as God intends – and death confronts us with that reality more starkly than anything – in that confrontation, the great faith that is God's gift to us becomes crucial to our flourishing

At this point in our ponderings, then ...

... three R words come to mind as a summary of the insights into great faith we have been exploring - **Reconciliation** with the God who continually has faith in our positive potential – **Relationships** with God, with all our neighbours, and with ourselves that being healing and growth – **Rejoicing** in the compassionate community that heals and nourishes us to flourish as our faith grows ever greater – seen this week in the joyful messiness of the last of our three Christian Urban Camps this summer that we did with the other Collaborating Churches in New West and Burnaby – focused on the parable of the Good Samaritan – the colourful cross is a great reminder of Jesus' confrontation with and defeat of death that lives at the centre of our great faith