

Title: **-S-** God is faithful to his promises, shouldn't we be faithful to ours?

Object: "Horton Hatches the Egg" by Dr. Seuss

Scripture: **-S-** "Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Luke 2:25-26 (ESV)

-S- Have you ever read the story, "*Horton Hatches the Egg*" by Dr. Seuss? It is a wonderful story about an elephant named Horton. The story begins with a lazy bird named Mayzie sitting on her egg in a tree. Sitting on the egg was tiresome and boring and Mayzie hated it. "I'd take a vacation, fly off for a rest if I could find someone to stay on my nest!" said Mayzie.

That's when Horton the elephant walked by. Mayzie asked Horton if he would sit on her egg while she took a little rest. Horton objected at first, but Mayzie promised that she would not be gone long, so Horton finally agreed and soon he was sitting on the nest while Mayzie flew off to Florida for a vacation.

In Florida, Mayzie had such fun that she decided she would never return to her nest. Days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months, but Horton kept sitting there, day after day. Winter came and icicles hung from Horton's trunk and his feet, but still he remained faithful to his promise to Mayzie.

"I'll stay on this egg and I won't let it freeze," he said with a sneeze. "I meant what I said and I said what I meant. An elephant is faithful, 100%."

Now, I don't know if elephants are really faithful 100% or not, but I know someone who is. God is faithful, 100%! The Bible is full of the promises of God, and God is always faithful to keep his promises.

In the Bible, there is a story about a man named Simeon. Simeon was a very old man who had faithfully served God all of his life. Simeon was looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. God had promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Christ, the promised Messiah. A few days after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to dedicate him to God. Simeon was in the temple. As soon as Simeon saw the baby, he knew that Jesus was the Christ and that God had kept his promise that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. God is faithful to his promises, 100%!

Many of us will make promises to God about things that we will do. I'm afraid that many times they are promises made, but never kept. If God is faithful to keep His promises to us, don't you think that it is important for us to keep our promises to Him? As we make our promises to God, let us say, like Horton, "I meant what I said and I said what I meant. I'll be faithful to God, 100%."

Dear Father, as You are faithful in keeping Your promises to us, may we be faithful in keeping our promises to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

John 21:18-25

Path to Glory

We live in a society where everyone wants to be different and unique by being the same as whatever is the “in” thing at the moment. Labeling people as “cool” or being “in” or even the opposite as being among the “out,” in truth is depersonalizing. The world has about 7 billion people who belong to “groups” of sameness, but spiritually each is unique in the eyes of God. God created people in His own image and God is infinite and He has created infinite spiritual personalities in people. The church along with the world often wants to get people to conform for it does not know how to deal with people who do not fall into their pattern. This is what created man-made denominations so each branch of Christianity would be unique and the people of that denomination could be known by uniquely being the same. We struggle with how to be different and unique by being the same for there is comfort in uniformity.

Can a church be faithful and honoring to Christ that has no music or signs hymns or has music that is true to the scriptures but it heart pumping? Does a church need pews or chairs or cushions on the floors as I experienced in other countries? Does a church have to have a podium with a stage higher than the congregation or just the opposite with the sanctuary designed to rise like an arena? Does church worship time use bulletins or power points? Must we use physical bibles or is an electronic one just as real? Do these question raise the prejudices and limitations of God or man? Should not the basic question be, “What is it that God desires of me or us?”

Just as each person is spiritually unique and designed for service to God, which is service as God designed and desires. So too, this is the goal of each church. Each apostle of Jesus served in unique ways and each of us are to serve Christ in the unique way He has designed us for and appreciate the unique design of those who, together with us make up Jesus' church. What is that design for Jesus' Church we call Canyon Bible?

When we want everyone to be just like us as individuals or as a church, it is dishonoring to God who created each person and church with a unique spiritual personality. At some point, whether young or middle aged or old; evidence of spiritual maturity is found in understanding that it is not about us, it is not about our worldly success (although doing well in one's career and performing duties in life with excellence is good), but it is about the glory of Christ Jesus and our living for His glory. What is written in Exodus is as true today as it was when Moses wrote it, *"For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, oh God, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct (and unique), I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"* (Exodus 33:16) How does the world know we have favor from God? It has little to do with our personality or spiritual gifting, but that God is with us, our obedience to Him and we serve Him.

Path of Spiritual Personalities

I began our time this morning asking questions to prepare us to deal with these with the concerns and problems of personality and concern for others that we find Jesus addressing with Peter and John. Turn in your bibles to John chapter 21. While you are finding John chapter 21, verse 18, I thought you might find it

interesting to know that our wonderful journey through *The Gospel According to John* began on January 5, 2013 and this sermon message, the final sermon from John's gospel account is the 112th teaching and finds us approximately 2 years and 10 months from the beginning. I pray that this journey has revealed to you countless glories of God as it has for me. Now hear the message of the glory of Christ Jesus from *The Gospel According to the Apostle John*.

We begin with Jesus is telling Peter how he will be martyred. All of us will die, unless the Lord comes quickly, but few know how they are to die. Reading beginning in verse 18, “ ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.’ **19** (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ ”

As John has taught us throughout his gospel account when something begins with “Truly, truly” which comes from the Hebrew “amen, amen” it means this is something important, pay attention. Jesus says, “Truly, truly when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted.” When men are young they are self-reliant, confident and are prepared for action. Most young men believe they will do great things with their lives. As my wife said of me, “Bill thought he would have the world set a fire by the time he was thirty and when he got there it wasn't even smoking.” When we are young we often think we will do more and do better than our parents. The greatest weakness of youth is the lack of experience. Placing one's life in God's hands and seeking His calling and path for their lives can deal with the lack of experience. When we think of

God's gifts for Canyon Bible we should not forget the gifts of youth, nor despise them and we should not attempt to put old more mature minds on the shoulders of the young. God will use the experiences of youth to mature people and make them more effective for His kingdom. The differences between youth, young adulthood, middle age and old age are the experiences God will use to make us into who He wants us to be. We should not force the patterns of one age upon another. Each age will be right if the person is seeking God. When one has faithfully served God throughout their life, they will be able to look back and see that God has indeed used them to do much by His power. This is the meaning of Jesus' instruction at the end of verse 19, "Follow me."

Jesus continues saying in verse 8, "but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go."

Our first impression is that as one grows old they will need others to care for them. But, this is not the case here and we know it is not what Jesus meant by what John adds in verse 19, "This ~~he~~ Jesus said to show by what kind of death ~~he~~ Peter was to glorify God." John is making sure we understand that another will dress or more actually undress you means the stripping off of the outer clothes and leaving the loin cloth when ones arms are stretched out to be nailed to the cross for crucifixion. We know from the scriptures that Peter spent the rest of his life serving the Lord faithfully and anticipating his martyrdom by crucifixion.

Tradition says when Peter was put to death he insisted on being crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to be crucified like his Lord Jesus was. As one condemned to be crucified Peter will carry the cross beam to the place of his execution as they tried with Jesus or as Jesus said in verse 18, "another will...carry you where you do not want to go." Peter did not look forward to his execution,

but he would be faithful in serving Christ and know his future was in Jesus' hands, not men's. Peter would be faithful and "Follow me" or follow Jesus the rest of his days.

Paths of Temperament

The last paragraph of *The Gospel According to John* is one that deals with personalities or temperaments. Follow me as I read beginning in verse 20, **20** "Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?' **21** When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about this man?' **22** Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!' **23** So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?' " Many who were alive in the first century misunderstood verse 23 to mean John would be alive when Jesus came the second time. John therefore makes it clear this is not the case.

As Jesus and Peter were walking and Jesus was telling Peter of his future that would be one of faithful service and end with martyrdom. Peter notices John following and out of concern says to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" Jesus responds not with an answer but a statement saying, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" Jesus' rebuke to Peter was to make it clear that what He had chosen for John was not to be Peter's concern. Jesus has plans for each believer and that plan is unique and not the concern of others. Just like Jesus wanted Peter to focus on what he needed to do

to be faithful, each believer needs to focus on what Jesus calls him or her to do and enjoy and appreciate when our paths intersect others.

The question for each of us is, “Are we being faithful to what Jesus has called us to be and do?” By the worlds standards our church is not successful. It is not large, nor has a good deal of money, neither do we have a TV program, nor a large complex. Not that there is necessarily anything wrong with these things nor should we be jealous of those who do possess these, but the question is, “Are we being faithful to what Jesus has called us to be and do?” This is what Jesus is telling Peter, “Do not worry about John and my plan for his life, but **“You follow me!”** We need not worry about other churches. The question for us as individuals and as a church is, “Are we being faithful to Christ?”

We know from the scriptures that John suffered for the cause of Christ, but his suffering was different than Peter’s. This principal is still true for believers today as it has been throughout church history. It is often by suffering that the saints glorify God. As the writer of Hebrews wrote, **“...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...”** (Hebrews 12:1-2) You may live to an old age and you may suffer little or you may die before what the world considers your time and you may suffer greatly for the cause of Christ, but still the question remains, “Are you being faithful to what Jesus has called you to be and do?”

The living out of your life should have the same goal as John’s purpose for writing his gospel account. He stated this clearly in chapter 20, **“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;**

31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30-31) Is your life being lived *“so that you and those around you may believe that Jesus is the Christ?”* Whatever the life path Jesus has chosen for you will be one, if you are faithful, of service that demonstrates; that you do not belong to this world, that you have been changed by Jesus and your faith in Jesus rules who you are and how you live.

Peter was a man of action. He is the first to speak and the first to act. Peter was not always wise, but he was the first. John on the other hand, is almost never the first to speak. John did not have a sword and he did not cut off an ear. Jesus appears on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and Peter jumps into the water to swim ashore. John brings in the boat and lands the catch. Peter is action and John is the quiet one, the thinker. Jesus had a plan for both of their lives. When Jesus, our Lord, chooses your spiritual gifting and His ministry for you it is not general, but it is specific and this is so you will accomplish what He wants for the fulfillment of His plan, not ours. Ministries vary, just as Peter’s, John’s, Paul’s and the other disciples, so too it is with us. This means spiritual giftings varies in order for us to fulfill Jesus’ plan. Jesus has called some people to be evangelists and some are to be disciplers and some to be equippers and some to be senders and some to be goers. It appears Peter was financially supported and Paul was a tentmaker – one is not right and one wrong, but they are both faithful in service to Jesus. The same is true with churches. Some churches have clear direction to evangelism and others the building up of the saints.

Peter is an evangelist preacher and many came to Christ through his preaching. In

Acts chapter 2, Peter's preaching resulting in "...those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41) John's ministry was different. In Matthew we read, "... Jesus saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them." (Matthew 4:21) John was a mender of nets. We know from his gospel account, epistles and Revelation that John's concern was to bring people back to God and for them to understand their position of being lost and needing Jesus. John's ministry was one of restoration.

As we seek God as individuals and collectively as His church, we ask what is our ministry. We seek God and we need to listen to God. Jesus says to each person, as it is written here in John, "You follow me!"

Paths of Followers

God calls some to be activists, some to be thinkers, some as evangelists or restorers or builders. However, let's be honest there are problems connected to each of these for each is needed but each sees only part of the picture. There are advantages of being young and of being old. The young will charge in and take action, but at times their actions can be foolish. The old have wisdom learned through living life, but at times they tend to become concerned with their own affairs and this limits their ability to serve others. The activist may be insensitive to those who move at a slower pace. The thinker can wait so long to act they miss the train. The evangelist can become shallow and concerned with conversion and not the need for spiritual growth afterwards. The builder may become critical of those who lay a foundation but do not finish the entire project.

The advantages of each age and spiritual gifting, temperament and calling are easily marred by sin. We see that we not only need Jesus, first and foremost, but we need each other as well to be complete.

The solution to these shortcomings is found in what Jesus told Peter and John who was with them listening. That solution is to **“Follow me.”** If our eyes, heart and soul are focused on Jesus we will have the power He gives through the Holy Spirit to overcome sin and live the standard of Christian service to the only Holy God. This is a mighty witness to the world. The journey begins with one step and that step will lead to the next. One day will be the foundation to build the next day upon and this establishes a path for life day after day, and year after year.

Paths of a true Christian

So whatever your gender and age, what are the daily, weekly and yearly signs of a life path lived for Jesus? What is the path that demonstrates a life more concerned about Jesus than ourselves? A life path more concerned about others than ourselves. What is the path that no matter what your spiritual gifting is enables one to fulfill their calling from Jesus? This path begins for everyone with keeping our focus on Jesus. Not on what others are doing and comparing yourself to them, but on what Jesus is calling you to be and do. Here are 8 and I realize there are more, but here are 8 things we need to strive for consistently and daily. These will build the foundation and show witness of one being on the true path of salvation found through Christ.

- A Christian is to worship Christ above the world, their spouse and their children. Our purpose in life is to worship Jesus and be His witness to

eternal truth in this lost and broken world.

- Christians use their unique spiritual gifting to serve others; beginning Jesus and then with their spouse and children. Next, serving our brothers and sisters in Christ. Living a spirit filled life is about serving others in the name of Jesus. We must divest ourselves of self-serving ego.
- Christians do not, as we found in this morning's scripture passage at the end of John, compare ourselves to others and what God has called them to be and do in their lives. We do not try and elevate ourselves at the expense of others.
- Christians spend dedicated time studying, meditating on and sharing the Word of God found in the Bible. This is far more important than TV, movies, video games, and sports or hunting. It develops our mind and heart to come into sync with the mind and heart of Christ.
- Christians seek God and lay our hearts and brokenness before God, listening to God and gaining understanding of His calling in our lives through protracted times of prayer.
- Christians live the precepts and commands found in the Bible. We are obedient to the scriptures. Jesus should be the focus and purpose to our lives every day. We do not get caught up in the world's materialism and standards or in truth lack of standards.
- Christians show their dedication through regular attendance and participation in church. Teaching others of the importance of God's community and church is important to the rhythm of life. One cannot be a Christian as taught in the scriptures unless they are committed to God's church and the people of that church. Just like in a marriage for better or

worst. Just as I strive to love all of you at all times no matter the circumstances.

- Christians give sacrificially to Jesus' church. The Bible teaches that the principal of tithing should begin at 10%. Tithing is an act of faith and obedience. To not tithe means one does not trust God and is disobedience.

These practices help us grow spiritually and serve better. We are all broken and Jesus has mended us. There is no room for boasting, no room for arrogance and no room for comparing ourselves to others as Peter did, even though he did so out of concern. First and foremost we need to keep our focus on Christ and then we need to recognize that Jesus has placed us here in this Church, Canyon Bible because we need each other. We are the body of Christ being lived out, the whole body, not parts of the body, but the holistic body of Jesus our Lord.

The choice is before you and me this day and each day. What say you? I say that I stand with Joshua, who boldly said, ["As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."](#) (Joshua 24:15) I will work hard to fulfill this, but I need not only Jesus, I need you to succeed! I am committed to Jesus and to you and to Canyon Bible. Are you committed to the same things as Jesus has called you to be? Together we will be even more faithful for we are the church. Amen!